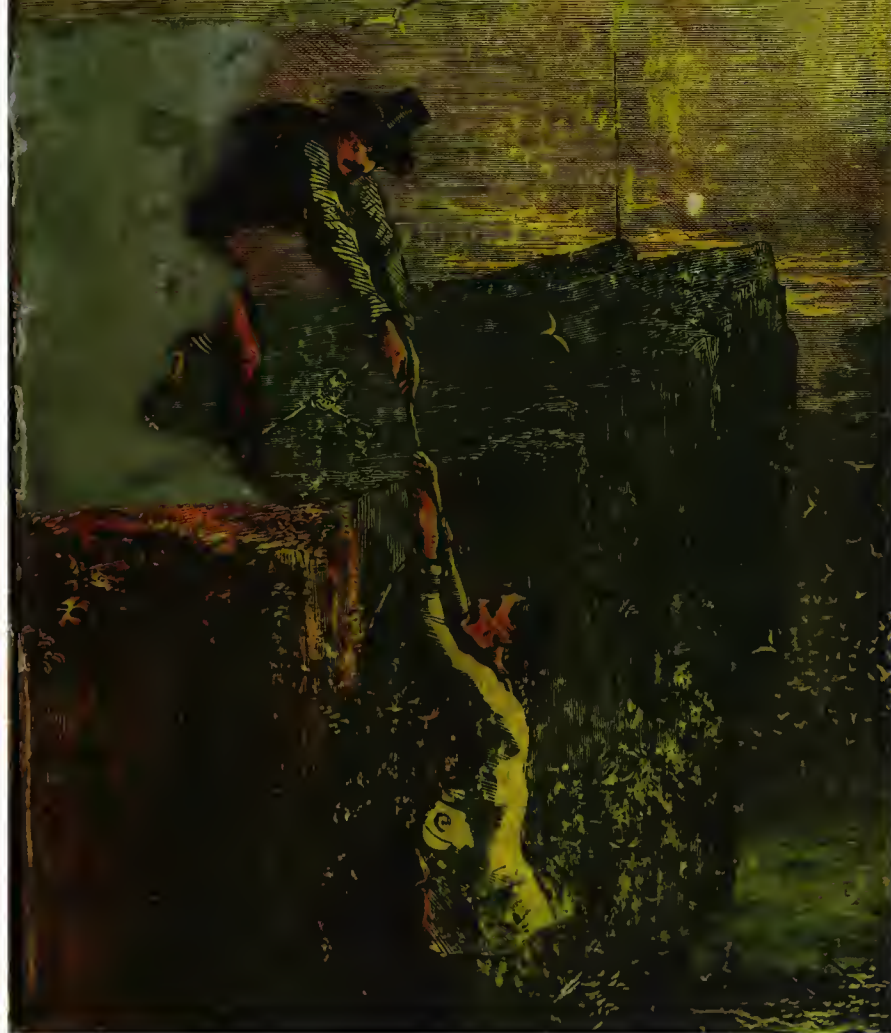


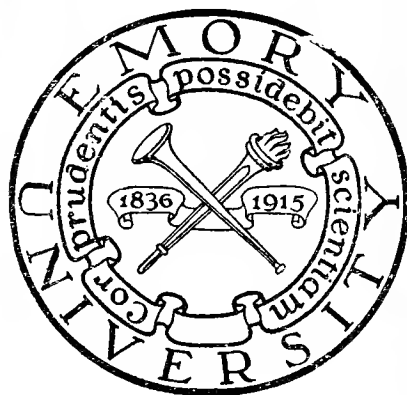


# THE HOODED SNAKE

BY WATTS PHILIPS.



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# THE HOODED SNAKE

A STORY OF

## The Secret Police.

“To beguile the time,  
Look like the time, bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue : look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under it.”

SHAKESPEARE.

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BY

WATTS PHILLIPS,

AUTHOR OF “JOSEPH CHAVIGNY,” “THE POOR STROLLERS,”  
“THE DEAD HEART,” ETC., ETC.

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## PREFACE.



THE publishers of the "HOODED SNAKE" have suggested to its author that a few words of preface are necessary, inasmuch as the scene of the story being laid in France, and as it has been the writer's endeavour to make his characters act and talk somewhat after the fashion of Frenchmen, the charge of adaptation, or translation, is almost certain to be brought against him by all those young critics whose knowledge of French literature consists of an intimate acquaintance with, at the most, half-a-dozen of its best known authors. It is, therefore, but right to state that the story—such as it is—owes its parentage



to the author's imagination only, and is derived from no foreign source whatever. Such assertion, as regards the "HOODED SNAKE," is rendered doubly necessary from the fact, that, a year or two since, its author produced a drama,—"*The Poor Strollers*,"—which it pleased a good-natured public to honour with a decided approbation; but, the very "flavour of sunny France," which the author had endeavoured to diffuse throughout his drama, was, with certain critics, seized upon as groundwork for suspicion; and, without pointing to a line in proof, they *hinted* at a "possible adaptation."—Had he invested the French strollers with the coarser attributes of the English mountebank, and made his characters English in everything but their birthplace, he might possibly have been allowed the parentage of his own drama; as it was, these precious young critics abused the public for persisting in its first opinion as to the drama's merits, and endeavoured by a "sneer" to do what they had failed to accomplish by proof. The author at the time received such criticism with a smile, and now speaks of it with indifference; yet it is but right, when the word original appears upon the title-page of either

drama or novel, that the writer should be considered distinctly to pledge himself to its truth.

The story of the "HOODED SNAKE" is intended to illustrate that corruption of manners arising out of the spy system, which attained so wonderful and alarming a development under the direction of the famous, or infamous Joseph Fouché, and it is a story that can hardly fail to interest the readers of the present day—when, unfortunately, a vast system of *espionage* is again organised in France—where the outspoken thought of the honest man is an offence to be punished as severely as though he had broken into his neighbour's house, or raised a hand against his neighbour's life—where "repression and surveillance have been carried to their extreme point, and are producing a social uneasiness of which no one can predict the result ;"\* 1,200,000 francs have been demanded by the French Government, and granted by the Legislative Body, in addition to the 2,000,000 francs already dedicated to the support of that terrible instrument

\* "Times" newspaper. March 23rd, 1858.

of despotism—the secret police, and the warning conveyed in Béranger's well-known song—

“ Parlons bas,  
Parlons bas,  
Ici près j'ai vu Judas,  
J'ai vu Judas, j'ai vu Judas,”

can never be uttered with more truthful effect than at the present time, when “Monsieur Judas” walks the streets in safety—and men eye each other askance—doubtful whether the fair-spoken friend is not a spy, whose name is secretly enrolled among, “Les limiers de la Police.”

The story of “THE HOODED SNAKE” is laid in the days of Fouché ; but, unless continental politics undergo a great change, such a treachery as it describes will soon find many a parallel in our own.

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# THE HOODED SNAKE.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE READER MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF PÈRE DOMINIQUE, IS INTRODUCED TO MONSIEUR ANATOLE CHIFFON, AND ALSO GETS A GLIMPSE OF THE BARON D'AUBIGNY'S GUESTS.

THE scene of our story lies in Brittany. It is one of those stormy nights so frequent on the gloomy Breton coasts, upon which the very shadow of death seems ever to rest, when Nature puts on her fiercest aspect, and the sea, lashed into fury by the wind, tosses its gigantic waves against the rocks, as though it would overleap every barrier that stood between it and its prey—trembling and awe-struck man. The voice of the storm is heard for miles inland ; and the peasant, hurrying homewards to his solitary hut across the savage and dreary *landes*, pauses to cross himself, while his blue lips move in prayer for help against the fiend that, as he believes, rides upon and rules the mighty blast ; while the fierce inhabitant of the coast, whose home is perched among the rocks, like the nest

of the vulture and the osprey ; and who, it is said, is as dangerous to the storm-smitten vessel as the rocks themselves, turns his scowling eye from the great fire of dried reeds and broom over which he is crouched, to the wall of his hut, where hangs a painted effigy of the Virgin, and prays that to-morrow's sun will rise on a wreck-strewn shore ; while his rough helpmate fastens the shutter, shielding her eyes the while, lest she should glanee without and be driven into madness by the sight of the spectral *crierien*—those phantom forms of shipwrecked men, who are ever driven onwards by a pitiless wind that mocks their cries for Christian burial.

“None pass Cape Raz without hurt or fright,” says the Breton proverb, and this night the grim features of those cruel rocks are hidden behind a shroud of blinding mist, as the bravo hides the dagger beneath his cloak, waiting for the coming prey. A wild night, a wild coast, and a wild people. Well may the Breton sailors pray, “Help me, great God, at Cape Raz ; my ship is so small, and my need is so great !”

“Why don't you open the door, some of you ?” said Dominique Bonchamp, as a loud knocking was heard at the door of his farm.

Upon ordinary occasions Père Dominique was not a man to be trifled with. A Breton farmer is king under his own roof, and at times, the government of farmer Bonchamp verged upon the despotic ; but when superhuman influence is dreaded, mere human influence

goes for naught ; so the circle of men, women, and children constituting the living furniture of Père Dominique's house sat motionless, and as the knocking increased, only gazed more fixedly at the fire.

“Open the door ; do you hear ?”

Had the circle been a circle of Druidical stones, it could not have been more deaf to his command.

“Marie Jeanne,” and he addressed a stalwart Breton servant-wench ; “do you go, or—” and the words came slowly through his lips, as the better to impress upon his auditors the enormity of their permitting such an act, “or am I to open the door myself.”

There was a movement in the circle, and upon each face there beamed but one expression—a devout wish that he would.

The Père Dominique was fat—unusually fat for a Breton—and, therefore, somewhat lethargic ; but, as the knocking continued, he made an effort to rise.

“Stay, Père Dominique ;” and a young peasant rose hastily from his seat, “since the door must be opened, I'll do it ; though,” and he crossed himself devoutly, “none but the fiend would knock at an honest man's door on such a night as this.”

“None but a dishonest man would turn even a dog from his door on such a night. Why, you're as white as the meal tub ; I thought you had more courage, Keroulas.”

“Courage !” and the young peasant drew himself



proudly up, while his dark eyes flashed from beneath his long hair, which, after the fashion of his country, hung long upon his shoulders ; “ courage ! If there’s any man but yourself, Père Dominique, in either Léon or Cornouaille, who doubts that, he is welcome to seek the proof. But when it comes to a wrestling-match with— ”

“ I heard the wheels of the death-cart plainly to-night, as I came from the fields,” broke in, with a sepulchral voice, a cadaverous-looking peasant, who sat as rivetted to his seat, with his hollow eyes fixed on the fire. “ Two skeletons were driving it as usual, for I heard their bones rattle in the wind ; but I shut my eyes as close as a rat-trap when it passed, for to look on them is death ! ”

Keroulas, who was moving towards the door, upon hearing this piece of cheering intelligence, halted abruptly, and glanced uneasily at the dark passage he must traverse to reach the principal entrance to the farm, when a voice, gentle and bird-like, that ever sung sweet music in his ear, said—

“ No harm can befall the good,—nor any other, while the blessed Virgin has them in her care. I will go with you, Keroulas.”

The speaker was the only daughter of Dominique Bonchamp,—a young girl between seventeen and eighteen years of age : her slight figure set off to advantage by the graceful Breton costume ; her large calm eyes were full of a holy simplicity ; and her face,

with its look of quiet serenity, was such as might have inspired the artist-monks, when, with a wondrous patience, they illuminated with many a saint-like face, the heavy missals that formed the only ornaments of their gloomy cells. It was a calm face, but not a sad one, for a smile was ever hovering about the lips,—as the Peri lingered by the half-closed gates of paradise.

“Nay, Yvonne,” said Keroulas, hastily, as she rose and was about to move towards him, “to permit that I must lack both courage and shame. If my cheek wanted colour, as father Dominique said, just now, your words have brought it back again.” And then, before Yvonne could make answer, he had snatched up a light and disappeared into the passage that led to the door.

“Brehan, the miller, was set upon by the *Courils*\* when returning from Quimper,” began the peasant with the cadaverous countenance, who was called Martin, and seemed to be especially rich in ghostly anecdote. “He came upon them suddenly, and was endeavouring to creep away, when they caught sight of him, for the moonlight was lying thick as snow upon the ground, and he was surrounded in a moment.”

“Did he dance with them?” asked Marie Jeanne, the dilation of whose eyes kept pace with Martin’s story.

\* The *Courils* are malignant dwarfs, that, according to Breton superstition, when disturbed at their moonlight revels, force the intruder to join in their dance till he dies of the fatigue.

“Did he dance with them ? of course not ; or he would never have lived to tell the story. Fortunately for him, he had a phial of holy water in his pouch ; it had been blessed that very day by the Bishop himself. But the *Courils* seized him, and carried him through the air nevertheless, leaving him insensible at his own door, where his wife found him in the morning ! ”

“Paul Lebrun says the miller was drunk, and that the *Courils* were the white fence-posts which he saw turning round in the road ! ”

All shook their heads in grave dissent at this solution ; and the speaker, a small, active, dark-eyed boy, shrunk behind the seat of Yvonne, abashed at the unpleasant reception his speech had met with ; for even Père Dominique sent a glance of deep reproach towards him.

“Hush ! ”

The heavy tread of Keroulas was heard returning. It was accompanied by that of a much lighter person ; and when Keroulas, who was the first to emerge from the passage, appeared, he was greeted by all with the question,

“Who is it ? ”

To Dominique Bonchamp, Keroulas made reply.

“Nobody : that is, nobody in particular. It's Monsieur Chiffon.”

And the young Breton, in a not very gracious manner, put down the light, and, without further heed of the new comer, resumed his seat.

The effect of the announcement was different upon Dominique. After one or two efforts he rose on his legs and advanced towards his unexpected guest.

"You are welcome, you are welcome, Monsieur Chiffon. It is to be hoped the news you bring will prove better than the weather. How does Monsieur le Baron? Is your young mistress well? she was somewhat ailing when Yvonne saw her yesterday. Where is your horse? you have put him up in the stable: ah! you know our ways, I see. What could have brought you abroad on such a night? your clothes are pouring a cataract!" and then, without pausing for a reply to his questions, he turned angrily to the circle round the fire: "Get up some of you! Is this Breton hospitality? What says the proverb? 'The best seat in the house for the stranger, and the best dish at the table,' and shall Monsieur Chiffon, Monsieur le Baron's valet, have less? Marie Jeanne! some more wood on the fire, and a fresh stool on the hearth."

The person to whom this welcome was addressed let his heavy and saturated cloak fall from his shoulders: then throwing his hat and whip upon an adjacent bench, stepped into the centre of the now widened circle, and, after throwing a rapid look around—which, however, comprehended each of its members—he turned his back upon them all, and stretched a pair of long lean hands over the flaming logs,—when having sufficiently warmed them, he drew them several times one over the other with a sharp

crackling sound—then wheeled round, and once more faced the group.

“So you took me for the fiend himself, I suppose, that you kept me so long beating the outside of your door ; *parbleu !* even *he* might be excused for seeking a shelter on such a night—nor would it be Christian-like to refuse it.”

A murmur of disapprobation came from the peasants. It was evident that Monsieur Chiffon stood by no means high in their regard.

Chiffon was a small, lean, sallow man, of that undecided age which leaves the guesser at fault as to its exact place between forty and fifty ; his hair, which grew thinly about his head, in ragged tufts, like patches of heath in an unfavourable soil, was of that unpleasant hue known as “foxy ;” but the true “foxy” character was in the eyes—small, quick, and piercing ; they gleamed from beneath the brows with a restless, furtive look, never resting long upon any one object, yet taking in all its points, whatever they might be, at a glance. The nose, which was slightly hooked, rose above a pair of thin, restless lips, continually moved by a nervous twitching at the corners. The neck was long and bent forward, though not from the weight of the head, which was unusually small. A decided protrusion of the lower part of the face, a wrinkling of the skin about the eyes, and a pricking back of the ears, whenever the faculties of Monsieur Chiffon became keenly excited, gave him the appearance of one

of those wild animals which creep with slow and stealthy steps, nearer and nearer ; till, certain of their prey, they make the final spring, darting with the swiftness of an arrow through the trembling air.

Of Monsieur Anatole Chiffon's past history, nothing was known, at least in Brittany, where he had appeared two years previous to the date of our story, bringing with him a letter of recommendation to the Chevalier de Preville, from one of the Chevalier's old Parisian associates, who had been—so the letter set forth—for many years the fortunate possessor of Monsieur Anatole's services, but, dying from the effects of a sword thrust received in a street quarrel, he left him (M. Chiffon) as a legacy to the Chevalier, or—whoever else would provide provide for him.

The Chevalier de Preville—a gay, light-hearted gentleman, who had been a reckless *bon vivant* under the monarchy, a careless, reckless fugitive during the worst days of the Republic—had returned to Paris after the fall of the Terrorists, but was forced again to leave that city, having in some way incurred the suspicion of the lynx-eyed Fouche, then Minister of Police, and retired with his only son, Victor de Preville, to Pontarlac, a small estate belonging to him in Brittany, the only remnant—that much extravagance and numerous confiscations had left—of a once princely fortune. Upon this estate he had lived in seclusion for three years, visiting only his nearest neighbour, the Baron d'Aubigny, one of the richest proprietors in

Brittany, with whom he loved to talk over those brilliant and by-gone days when fashion and folly—the terms are but too often synonymous—held misrule in Paris, and vice sat crowned with the diadem of a king. Since then, the whirligig of time had brought its changes. The Baron d'Aubigny had become a sterner and a wiser man for the many lessons that experience had taught. Not so the Chevalier ; it was his boast that he had sailed hitherto laughing down the stream of life, and laughing he would finish the voyage, gliding into that sea of oblivion—for, according to his philosophy, it was such—the grave. The ghastly presence of the guillotine brought with it no terrors for him ; he had plotted and counter-plotted under its very shadow ; and now, that it had passed away, and all France was embodied in one man—who, like the angel of death, was destined to sweep over Europe—its glory and its scourge, the Chevalier suddenly gave over plotting, and retired, as he said, “like Cincinnatus, to his cabbage garden, the cabbage being a vegetable in which careful cultivation might develop a soundness of heart that it would be in vain to look for in man.” With the Chevalier, life was, in the words of a French writer, “a chaplet of small joys and petty miseries which the philosopher shakes with a laugh.”

The chevalier was too poor to treat himself to the luxury of such an accomplished valet as Anatole Chiffon, and too good-natured (the world said good nature was the Chevalier's one fault) to rudely turn

away his friend's bequest—so he made it over to his friend D'Aubigny, to whose fortune half-a-dozen mouths, more or less, could make no difference.

And thus it was that Anatole Chiffon became valet to the Baron D'Aubigny.

We must now apologize to our readers, and also to those assembled in Farmer Bonchamp's house, for leaving Monsieur Chiffon standing so long with his back to the fire.

"Such subjects are ill to jest upon, Monsieur Chiffon," said the farmer, reproachfully, as the valet moved towards a seat, selecting—not that placed for him—but the one left vacant by Keroulas, who had risen to assist in drawing the wine, which Marie Jeanne was preparing to warm over the fire.

This preference will not be wondered at when we state that the seat vacated by the young peasant was next to that of the pretty Yvonne, who, however, seemed but little pleased by the change of neighbours.

"Why ill to jest upon, Père Dominique? He who makes but a jest of the devil, fears him not; and is it not a mark of holiness to set him and his at defiance?"

Seven hands simultaneously crossed seven bosoms,\* as farmer Bonchamp made answer—

"At certain times, the demons have power, and

\* "A Breton peasant" says the proverb, "has ever a prayer on his lip, and a cross at his finger end. Among the lower class, no true Breton places bread to his lips, without first making the cross upon it with his knife.



then ensues the commotion in the air, for there is no rest for the elements, when Satan is unloosed."

"Nor much for man, when such a storm as this is raging—whew! how it blew as I crossed the heath;" and pursing his thin lips, Chiffon gave a shrill whistle in imitation of the sound of the wind at a distance, 'ere it came roaring and shrieking round the house.

"Don't do that!" implored Martin, with something like a menace in his voice, "without you wish to bring the hurricane upon us, till it blows the roof from the farm, and the wall about our ears; for if that comes to pass, even the Buguel Nos could not save us."

"And who may that gentleman be? I never heard his name before."

"He never heard of the Buguel Nos!"\*

Here all the peasants leaned solemnly forward and gazed pityingly at the unmoved Chiffon, while Martin, sinking his voice into a whisper, continued—

"The Buguel Nos is the friend of man. Only pray to him for aid, and he is sure to be by your side in the extremity of danger."

"A friend in need is a friend indeed; it shall be my endeavour to make the acquaintance of your Buguel Nos."

\* The *Buguel Nos*, a supernatural being of vast stature, which increases as he approaches those to whom he appears. The Buguel Nos resembles, in some peculiarities, the Number Nip of the Germans, only that the former is ever friendly in his intentions towards man.

Without heeding the interruption, Martin went on.

"I have seen him."

"You have?"

"I have!" A buzz of excitement from the peasants. Martin was evidently considered by all as an extraordinary man. "I saw him near Pont Croix. I got somehow benighted, and lost my road about two miles to the west of Andenac's farm, close upon the rising ground that overlooks Deadman's Bay, where the Dutch brig went to pieces. You can imagine my fear."

"They could, they did!" Chiffon glanced sharply at the pale serious faces about him; it was plain they shared it.

"Luckily, I had a bottle of brandy—genuine Nantz—and took a long steady draught."

The peasants drew in their breath, then smacked their lips; it was done unconsciously, but with a relish.

"I then sat down to think over what had best be done. I sat for nearly an hour, turning over first one thing, then another in my mind; when, putting down my hand for the Nantes, I found the bottle—empty! I at once came to the conclusion—"

"That you had drunk its contents."

Martin gave the valet a look of contempt. "That I was on unholy ground; and scarcely had I become aware of this, than the stone upon which I was seated began to whirl rapidly round. At the same time I

descried something black approaching over the heath."

The peasants crossed themselves.

"It stopped some dozen yards from me, but without being aware of my presence, for I had crawled behind the stone which had served me for a seat; and then I plainly saw the tail and horns, and knew it was the fiend himself."

Martin's listeners glanced over their shoulders, and drew their stools closer together.

"He walked round and round the stone, evidently looking for me."

"I thought he hadn't seen you;" said the incredulous Chiffon.

"When I remembered," continued Martin, who was not to be put out in his narrative, "the Buguel Nos, and prayed to him to relieve me from my danger."

"Did he come?"

"Could I be here, if he had not? Suddenly his tall form stepped from out the mist, which seemed as thick as a wall, and he stood between me and the Accursed One; his figure grew larger and taller as he approached me, till it seemed as though the stars were resting on his forehead—at last he stood by my side."

"Could you see the stars through the mist that was as thick as a wall?" put in Chiffon, slyly.

"He loosed his long white mantle from his shoulders, and just as the fiend uttered a fearful yell,

and made a rush forward, he dropped it over me. I was saved."

A long sigh of relief from the peasants. Then Martin, pointing to the dark-eyed boy, who, recovered from his rebuff, was playing with the logs on the fire, said, "Zizi knows what I relate to be true; for his father—rest his soul!—was one of those who found me in the morning."

"That he did;" laughed the urchin, twirling a piece of the burning wood between his fingers, "That he did. He was out a reed-gathering, when he came upon Martin, stretched on the ground. He didn't make out a man at first, because Martin was half covered by a snow-drift, and, therefore, wouldn't have stopped, but that one of Andenac's black cows, which had wandered in the night, was lying down close by."

"Ah! ah! I see; and in endeavouring to catch the cow, he lighted upon Martin," laughed Chiffon.

"So it pleased the blessed St. Ifflam to direct it," broke in Martin. "Talak found me beneath the snow-drift, half-dead, with the empty bottle beside me." Here the murmur of thanksgiving and the irreverent mirth of Chiffon, were alike interrupted by a fresh knocking at the outer door. And this time there was slight delay in answering the summons, Chiffon, at the first stroke, leaping lightly to his feet.

"As I expected; they have made out the farm by the light from the windows. These gentlemen are guests for Monsieur le Baron," he said, in brief expla-

nation to Bonchamp, who had also risen ; “ they come from the coast, and the Baron, who knew they must take your farm on the way, desired me to meet them here, and bring them on.”

“ Will they go on to the maison D’Aubigny to-night ?” inquired the farmer, as several of the labourers hurried to the door to render assistance to the travellers.

“ The Baron’s orders are imperative. Besides, a man can but be wet through ; and these gentlemen must be as thoroughly sea-soaked as the weeds that float upon the billows. It’s not easy landing at the best of times near Cape Raz.”

“ Landing ! why there was but one ship off the shore before nightfall. Paul Lebrun said it was an English brig by the build, though she carried French colours. I hope these messieurs are not English. In most things the Baron’s word is law ; but—”

“ English ! no.” Chiffon paused, then glanced upwards with his glittering eyes into the open face of the farmer. “ So Paul Lebrun thought that vessel English—umph !”

“ Paul ought to know : he has been in one of their prisons on the other side of the water !”

“ Ah ! nothing is so little likely to rust in the memory as the remembrance of a wrong. And, upon an emergency, where might this knowing gentleman be found ?”

“ At Pont Croix : a good sailor, though a wild one.”

“From England ! it may be—and yet,” muttered Chiffon, as the farmer left him to welcome the new arrivals, “I would give something to be certain ; nay, I must be certain. Let me see. Le Brun—Pont Croix : that must not slip my memory.”

Two persons,—gentlemen by their perfect ease of manner and general bearing—had entered the large room ; and now, conducted by Père Dominique, advanced towards the fire, shaking, as they did so, the rain from their garments ; the peasants, who had all risen, drawing back respectfully as the strangers approached.

“You say that my good friend, the Baron D’Aubigny, has sent us a guide. By my faith, we stand in no small need of one, if the remaining part of the road is as difficult to follow as that we have already traversed. Oh !” and the speaker, a tall, dark man, with a somewhat clerical appearance, eyed Chiffon inquisitively, as that gentleman advanced, and stood bowing before him, “you are the envoy, I suppose ?”

“Monsieur supposes correctly. I am the confidential servant of Monsieur le Baron d’Aubigny.”

“Bah ! the servant who proclaims his position thus loudly, is seldom worthy of the confidence bestowed.” Then, turning to his companion, he continued, “’Twere useless to tarry here, Dupont. The distance to the maison d’Aubigny is only two miles, so the good farmer informs me ; and, guided by this fellow, we shall travel it safely and quickly.”

At the word "fellow," uttered somewhat contemptuously by the tall, dark man, a close observer might have seen a quick, almost savage gleam, dart from the eyes of Chiffon,—but there were no such close observers present,—and, in a moment, the fierce gleam was gone, and the face as unruffled as before.

"It was Monsieur le Baron's wish that messieurs should not delay on the road."

The dark man again eyed him keenly. "Did my friend, the Baron, give a reason for his wish?"

Chiffon shrugged his shoulders.

"It is for me to obey Monsieur le Baron's commands. It is for others to demand their reason."

"A sharp knave," thought the stranger. Then turning to his companion—"We must depart at once, it seems, but not before we have thanked this honest Breton for his proffered hospitality. I have travelled much, but it is only in Brittany so warm a welcome meets a stranger on the threshold."

"That smells well," said the smaller of the two strangers, addressed by the other as Dupont—"that smells well," and he pointed to the bowl of warm wine which Marie Jeanne had just lifted from the fire.

"Nor will its taste be less pleasing, I trust;" and Dominique Bonchamp, taking the bowl from Marie Jeanne, handed it first to the taller stranger, who he instinctively recognised as the other's superior in rank. "Drink, Monsieur, and accept the old Breton salutation—the blessing of God be with you!"

“And with you, friend.” Then, taking a long draught of the wine, the dark man handed the bowl to his companion, who returned it empty to Marie Jeanne, much to the chagrin of Chiffon, for whose refection this delectable beverage had been expressly prepared.

“A draught to quicken the blood and awaken a fresh life in the veins of the dying. And now, if my friend, here, with the hawk visage, is agreeable, we will start for the maison D’Aubigny.”

“Stop a moment, Marcel, let us first”—and Dupont, who had taken out his purse, prepared to draw the strings, when Père Dominique laid a friendly but heavy hand upon his arm.

“Put up your money, Monsieur, we Bretons give, but do not sell, our hospitality, and least of all would we sell it to the friends of Baron D’Aubigny.”

Dupont coloured, stammered out an excuse, and hastily returned his purse to his pocket, while Marcel, the taller of the two, prepared to re-adjust his cloak, first unloosing, for a moment, the strap which attached a small leathern case to his side.

“No offence is taken, Monsieur, nor, I hope, given,” said the farmer, when an exclamation from Marcel startled the company.

“*Ventrebleu!* you are too officious, sirrah! how dare you, unasked, touch aught of mine?” Chiffon, who had lifted the little travelling case, replaced it quietly on the bench.



“Pardon me ; I thought it my place to assist, Monsieur.”

“What is your name ?”

“Chiffon.”

“Then, learn, Monsieur Chiffon, that, when travelling, it is the habit of a wise man to attend to himself.” So saying, he rebuckled the little case to its strap, resumed his coat and hat, and moved toward the door, followed by his companion.

“Good night, Père Dominique—good night, my pretty Yvonne ;” and Chiffon prepared to follow the travellers out of the room. “Pont Croix, I think you said ? and the name Lebrun ?”

The honest farmer nodded, and Monsieur Anatole Chiffon, with a musing look, took his departure.

## CHAPTER II.

THE BARON D'AUBIGNY AND HIS DAUGHTER—THE CHEVALIER DE PREVILLE AND HIS SON—AN ENTHUSIAST, AND A LAUGHING PHILOSOPHER.

THE Baron is slowly pacing the floor of the principal salon in the maison d'Aubigny—at every lull in the storm that is raging without he pauses, and bending his head slightly forward, listens attentively, till the hoarse murmur of the wind is heard again like the rolling surge of a distant sea, growing louder and louder, till it sweeps like a billow over the house, and dashes itself, howling and screaming, against the pointed turrets that crown the roof; making every bolt and bar, every shutter and door, that would keep it from the warm life within, strain and creak, as it shakes them in the frenzy of its wrath.

“Surely, I heard the beat of horses’ hoofs.” The Baron spoke this to himself, for the room had other occupants, and as he did so he approached nearer to one of the great windows.

"This wind is Jacobin at heart ; it roars and blusters, so that no other tongue may be heard, while it does its work of destruction alike on sea and land—there—now it falls again."

He listened attentively, then with an impatient stamp of the foot resumed his promenade.

"They must have taken Bonchamp's farm on their road. Chiffon could not have missed them. Should that have chanced, 'twere no easy task for them to make out the path over these dreary heaths."

A clear, ringing voice, silvery as a woman's, broke in upon the Baron's reverie, and a gentleman who for some minutes had been engaged watching two chess players, a young lady and gentleman, who with himself were the other occupants of the room, lounged slowly across, and said, as he threw himself carelessly into a chair :

"Are you exercising yourself in that way for amusement or health, d'Aubigny ? that will make the hundred and seventh time you've taken the measure of this room. Shall we try what cards will do to dissipate ennui ? or, do you intend your walk to be perpetual, like the wandering Jew's—the amiable peripatetic in whom our wise peasants believe so devoutly ?"

"I am in no humour for cards to-night, besides I confess myself somewhat uneasy at the non-arrival of these looked-for guests, and Chiffon also ; the heath is full of water-courses, and these rains—"

The other gentleman interrupted him with a laugh.

"Oh! never fear for Chiffon, while there's a rope to be had in France he's safe from either fire or water."

"You do not like Chiffon?"

"Not like him—I adore him—Chiffon's my model man. He's a living type of the age—a creature with no fixed principles; sure, like a cork, to swim in all weathers and ride out storms that would sink a gallant vessel like yourself, who will never put up the helm in time; but, with the one end in view, goes ever steadily onwards, though the charts mark 'rocks and sand-banks' so plainly, that all eyes, but yours, can read."

"I trust you do not compare—" began the Baron somewhat haughtily.

"Certainly not, *mon cher*; nevertheless, a wise man might learn a lesson by watching in stormy times the movements of such men as Chiffon. He's a straw, I grant you, but straws will show the way the wind blows."

"And so you think, Chevalier—?"

But the Baron seemed doomed to interruption.

"I do nothing of the kind, I gave over thinking when I retired to Brittany. It's a kind of labour that does not suit this climate; everybody here, from the highest to the lowest, act upon impulse—thought is quite out of the question."

"Do I act upon impulse only?"

"Oh! I leave you out of the question. True, you were born in Brittany, but then you were bred in the Faubourg St. Germain."

"And these gallant peasants? have they acted from impulse only, when they have so often proved themselves ready to sacrifice their property and lives at the call of King and Country?"

"Impulse, nothing but impulse, I assure you, my dear Baron. Ask any ex-Chouan,\* you've plenty on your estate, what those two words King and Country mean; his answer will not be particularly edifying."

"He will tell you, de Preville," said the Baron, warmly, "that it means his religion and his home, for either of which he is ready to leave the spade and plough for the sabre and the musket. He alone it was who stood firm when religion had ceased to be even a name in France, and when the blessed sanctity of his home was polluted by the revolutionary rabble, that sowed the salt of desolation in his fields, and stained the bright waters of the Loire with his father's and children's blood."

The Baron was evidently excited; not so the Chevalier.

"You set a high value upon these peasants, mon cher."

"I do. I should be unworthy of the trust I hold, could I do otherwise."

"And yet," and a slight sneer crept over de Pre-

\* *Chouans* (owls), a name given by the Republicans (themselves termed *blues* from the colour of their uniform), to the Royalist peasants of Brittany, the scream of the owl being the war-cry they generally used.

ville's face, and for a moment unpleasantly disturbed its smiling expression, "and yet you would risk their lives and your own—certainly your own if you risked theirs—should some wild scheme present itself proposing, as an end, the re-establishment of a dynasty that is dead and—the fate of all that dies in this world—forgotten."

The Baron started and glanced uneasily at de Preville; but all trace of the sneer was gone and the face beamed sunny as before.

"You have said truly, that you speak without thinking; be assured it would be upon no slight cause that I or any right thinking man would dare again to call down upon this unhappy country the tempest of war, whose effects it has so terribly and so recently felt."

"Exactly," and the Chevalier suppressed a yawn, for the conversation was taking a serious tone, a thing, that of all others, he abhorred. "That republican scoundrel, Hoche, did his work with a will and a firm hand to back it. Brittany still exists, it is true, but with bent head and clasped hands, like one that awaits the executioner."

"For shame! de Preville, your speech belies your nature. When did a Breton fear to face even his executioner! Let but his cause be just, and he is willing that the furrow ploughed by his hands in the morning shall, ere night, become his grave."

The Chevalier yawned again, it was evident the

conversation was uninteresting. The Baron perceived his friend's weariness, and said, with a smile,

"Time was when Felix de Preville was not so averse to conspiracies."

"Time *was*, ah! my friend, that's just it. Time was, when we were both young," and he passed a white hand over his unwrinkled forehead. "But I have given up conspiring with my other youthful follies; besides, conspiracies can never prosper, you must trust to so many men."

"Many men may be faithful."

"Certainly not! the thing is impossible. I've studied men as diligently as I'm now studying gardening—man is, I must confess, a creature by no means deficient in points to admire, but, upon the whole, I prefer the cabbage."

"You are incorrigible."

"Then spare me the correction." The Chevalier laughed gaily, rose, and again approached the chess players. "How goes the game, or rather, how has it gone? for I see it is concluded."

The young man answered,

"Oh! Eugenie has won."

The Chevalier bowed to the lady.

"Mademoiselle wins everything—she won an old man's heart among other things long ago."

Eugenie d'Aubigny shook her head; "Your heart, Chevalier, what should I do with that?"

"What young ladies do with all hearts when they

belong to so aged a person as myself, throw it away, or place it with other rubbish in a corner."

"Rather preserve it with all the care so inestimable a gift deserves."

"Not much, I fear ; but, were I Victor's age."

The young man rose immediately.

"Spare me, Sir, I beg," then turning to Eugenie, "my father's compliments when addressed to those of his own sex cut both ways, but with a lady—"

"The sword blade is hidden in flowers."

It was the Baron d'Aubigny who now joined the group.

De Preville shrugged his shoulders.

"They will no longer permit us to be young."

"The Chevalier would forget that time exists."

"And who does not in the presence of Mademoiselle ?"

The Baron laid his hand upon his friend's arm and motioned for silence.

The storm had ceased, the wind had gone down, and the sound of horses' hoofs upon the road leading to the house was now plainly audible.

"At last they are here."

All was commotion—the Baron hastening down to the courtyard to be the first to greet his guests, while Eugenie, who was not fine lady enough to ignore the kitchen, departed to superintend the preparations for supper, and the Chevalier and Victor were left alone by the fire. We take advantage of this short pause



in the action of our story to describe more in detail the two younger members of the little party that had so lately occupied the room.

Eugenie d'Aubigny was the Baron's daughter, his only daughter, and by him regarded, not without reason, as a miracle of grace and beauty. We say, not without reason, because the more affectionate the parents, the more eager are they to put forward the like claims to their offspring, without, to other than the parental eye, the requisite qualification being apparent. Eugenie had reached her twenty-first year; she was of a tall, graceful figure; her height, which was rather above than below the usual standard, being relieved by the lithesome ease of her every motion. Her features were well cut, full of animation, and beaming with intelligence; the eyes, of a rich brown, were ever varying in their expression, one moment quick and sparkling, the next soft with a loving tenderness, that rose holy as a prayer from the young girl's soul; her forehead was high, and the line of the head magnificently arched; while the hair, a Pactolus of wealth, flowed in heavy, golden-tinted waves upon her shoulders, or would have flowed had they not been caught up and looped on either side behind her shell-like ears,—two gorgeous curtains lifted aside that reverential eyes might gaze upon the picture of a saint. From a light and graceful child, Eugenie had become a beautiful woman; but the blossom had not changed into the fruit, the bud had not burst into the flower

beneath her father's eye. She, too, had suffered from the "Terror,"—the click of the guillotine had early met her ear, and its tall shadow spread across her path. Her mother had been compelled to bend her head beneath the axe, finding in its keen edge her passport to a better world, where such crime is unknown, or, if known, remembered only by those who pity and forgive. The baron d'Aubigny, on the news of his wife's death, voluntarily surrendered himself to her assassins, but was snatched from the fate he courted by that last cast of the revolutionary dice, which stopped the loaded tumbril in the street and checked the descending axe, till it had cast beneath it, bound and bleeding, those who but yesterday were executioners. Eugenie, at the commencement of the "Terror," had been conveyed out of Paris and hurried over the frontier, finding safety and a home with a maiden Aunt at Coblentz, in which city she remained till summoned again to France to join her father on his estates in Brittany, arriving at about the same time as the Chevalier de Preville and his son, the latter of whom had made the acquaintance of Mademoiselle many months previous, and during her residence at Coblentz; he, Victor, having visited at the house of her aunt, who was an old friend of his father's and god-mother to himself.

Victor de Preville was Eugenie's elder by three years, and had already taken an active part in the struggles which had convulsed his native country.

Unlike his father, he bore upon his face the true type of the enthusiast, a clear olive complexion, dark, flashing eyes, and hair that hung about his cheeks in sombre masses ; the straight nose, the curved nostrils and full scornful lip, all bespoke the native city of the mother he had lost—Marscilles. Restless, and eager to transmit each thought into as rapid an action, his father, who loved him dearly, had found it difficult to induce him to share his retirement in Brittany. So firm, indeed, had been his refusal, that his sudden change of resolution had been scarcely credited until he made his appearance at the old chatcau Pontarlac, about a week after Mademoiselle Eugenie had taken up her abode in the maison d'Aubigny. A suspicion, for a moment, had entered the mind of the Chevalier, but was immediately dismissed as a thing impossible. Victor knew that the hand of the heiress to the estates of d'Aubigny was already disposed of to another. From an early age she had been affianced to the young Count de Marigny, a formal agreement had been entered into by their respective parents ; and, though the young people had not met since childhood, Marigny having been for years an exile in England, where he still remained holding an office of trust in the household of the fugitive king, yet the matter was considered so thoroughly as an affair concluded, that de Preville wasted no further thought about it.

“ Victor is no fool,” he reasoned, “ and none but a

fool would sigh after a girl that is sure to be another's. The fox and the grapes is a very good fable, but I hold the fox to have been a fool to sit cursing under the tree instead of bestirring himself to find one more accessible."

The Chevalier said with truth that he had studied men; but there was one portion of mankind he had yet to study, that portion in which the warm dictates of the heart were held to have greater weight than the cool reasoning of the brain, and where an all-absorbing love, not for self, but for another, breaks down the barriers of worldly prudence and sets an interested calculation at defiance.

The Chevalier sneered at the world and cultivated his garden. "I know Victor," he would say, "I've studied him thoroughly—It's a good soil. I can sow the seed and grow what I desire." But nature sometimes deceives the most skilful gardener, and the Chevalier had yet to learn that a man is not a cabbage.

"Do you know these gentlemen, sir?" asked Victor of his father, when they were left alone in the room.

"These gentlemen newly arrived? No: they are friends whose acquaintance the Baron made in times when friends were valuable. They did him, he says, good service: and he is not the man to forget it."

"He would not be the Baron d'Aubigny if he did though that is but a sorry compliment after all. No man forgets a kindness: time cannot wipe away a service received."

The Chevalier eyed his son for a moment as one would examine a curiosity ; then, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, ejaculated " humph !" and made no further answer.

" They come from America, the Baron said."

" Yes ; the Baron said so."

" The land of Washington !" and Victor's eyes sparkled : " the land in which liberty is other than a name,—the land of freemen !"

" And slaves ;" said the Chevalier, drily.

" Oh ! my father, is it not there where the rights of man—"

" Are promulgated, you would say ?" and his father broke into his usual silvery laugh. " It is quite true, they are so :—to the music of fetters, and the ceaseless cracking of the slaver's whip !"

" I grant that slavery is wrong—"

De Preville shrugged his shoulders.

" It's a wrong that's pretty nearly universal : the world is divided into but two classes—masters and slaves !"

" But, sir—"

" There, there, argument bores me,—you're young, and can bear the fatigue of contradiction,—I can't,—so have it all your own way. We are all that which we profess to be !"

" I should hope so," said Victor, laughing.

The Chevalier looked at him again. Then, after a moment's pause,—

“How old are you, Victor?”

“Surely you know, sir!”

The Chevalier repeated the question.

“Twenty-four.”

“And yet would judge things by their surface! Well, I’m fond of novelties; and decidedly I’m proud of you as a son.”

The door of the room opened, and the Baron entered, followed by the two strangers last seen by us beneath the roof of Dominique Bonchamp’s farm.

The Baron advanced to the fireplace, in which some huge logs were burning cheerfully.

“My friend, the Chevalier de Preville.”

The new comers bowed.

“Chevalier, this is a gentleman to whom I am highly indebted,—Monsieur Etienne Marcel. My friends, I am sure, will become his.”

With an ineffable grace the Chevalier acknowledged the introduction, shedding one of his sunniest smiles, and dropping one of his lowest bows.

“This gentleman is a friend of Monsieur Marcel’s, and therefore a friend of mine,—Monsieur Dupont.”

Again the Chevalier looked the picture of amiability.

“My daughter has flown, I see. But where is Victor?”

Victor de Preville, on the entrance of the two strangers, had moved some steps towards them, when his glance rested on the tallest of the two.—Victor

started—hesitated—then looked again, and was about to advance, when the name mentioned by the Baron met his ear. Again he hesitated, and looked earnestly at the stranger.

“It surely must be,—and yet Etienne Marcel was the name the Baron mentioned.”

At this moment the eyes of the stranger met his : the eyebrows rose for a moment, and a look of much astonishment swept over his face, but it vanished as rapidly, unperceived by all but Victor.

“Allow me to introduce you, Victor, to my friend, M. Etienne Marcel.”

“I have, that is, I think I have met Monsieur—Monsieur—”

“Marcel !” said the stranger quickly.

“Monsieur Marcel before.”

“You are mistaken,—your face is strange to me ! besides I have not visited Europe for some years. But mine is one of those faces that Dame Nature turns out by the dozen ; or, perhaps, I may be the fortunate possessor of a *Doppelganger*,\* as the Germans would say.”

The Baron laughed at the mistake, and turned to Monsieur Dupont, who was describing to the Chevalier the perils of their night-ride : as he did so, Marcel laid his hand upon Victor’s arm, and drew him a few paces apart ; then, speaking in a hurried whisper, he said,—

“Have you yet to be so well acquainted with danger

\* *Doppelganger*—a double or second self.

as to have to learn the necessity of caution, Victor de Preville ?”

“ You are, then ?—”

“ Etienne Marcel. If I am content with my name, why should others cavil at it ? Our meeting here is unexpected.”

“ And undesired, you would say ?”

“ For the present,—I confess as much. But the lady, where is she ?”

“ Also here.”

The dark brows of the stranger met in a frown.

“ I have done you a service, Victor de Preville : in my turn, I require one. Hasten to her at once,—you understand ? and prepare her to receive”—he spoke with emphasis—“ Monsieur Etienne Marcel !”

“ It shall be done : but it is for us to implore silence of you,—our secret is to all, but you, unknown.”

The dark brows parted once more.

“ Good ! You have been prudent, I see ; be so still, and fear me not. But see her.”

Victor, with a gesture of assent, moved towards the door.

“ And let the old friend be forgotten in the new,—no uncommon thing, as the world goes.”

Etienne Marcel turned to the group before the fire, and was soon deep in the mysteries of narrow bridle-paths and hidden watercourses ; but Victor de Preville had disappeared from the room.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE MORNING AFTER THE STORM.

CAREFULLY descending a rugged, and to any but practised feet, perilous path, that was cut into the face of the cliff, Monsieur Anatole Chiffon reached in safety, through much cat-like agility, the bay, upon whose carpet of sand the waves of that "vast and melancholy sea" break with a hollow and depressing sound, like a groan wrung suddenly from the heart of a listening multitude. To-day, the sea was calm,—calm for that iron coast whose savage recesses were peopled—thinly peopled—by men as rough as its rocks, as remorseless and cruel as its seas. The sun had lifted his broad face above the horizon, and gazing down into the vast mirror of sparkling water, rested upon his many-tinted couch of cloud, admiring his majestic beauty, and shaking abroad his golden locks in the fullness of his pride. The treacherous sea crept softly to the feet of the rejoicing earth, and touched them with her Judas' kiss, or, softly heaving her broad bosom, threw showers of spray, like tears, against the

scarred face of the tall cliffs, as though repentant of her former violence. The gorged snake lay gasping in the sun ; the tiger, its vengeance for the moment glutted, licked the hand that but yesterday it tore, and to-morrow—to night, perhaps—will tear again.

Monsieur Anotole Chiffon, little troubled by such reflections, rested for a moment after his descent, leaning his back against a detached mass of rock, and rubbing as usual, his thin, claw-like hands gently the one over the other.

“Not a vestige of the brig,—no, she’s gone !” and he scanned the horizon with a keen and searching glance. Not a sail was to be seen—not one. Yes ; —no ; it was but the wing of a sea bird, that, poised above the wave, had caught upon her snowy feathers a stray beam from the regal sun. All around wore the aspect of a majestic calm ; an artist would have delighted in the quiet grandeur of the scene, but Monsieur Chiffon viewed nature through other than artistic eyes ; a something very like an oath escaped his lips, and he stamped his foot deep into the wet sand.

“I would have given a dozen gold pieces,—nay, a score (it was plain that Monsieur Chiffon was very vexed indeed), to have known rightly to what nation that brig belonged ;—a night-bird, that clothes herself in darkness, and is gone with the first dawn of the day.”

It could scarcely have been for his master that the valet was anxious for this information ; the Baron

must already have known it from his guests ; but Anatole was eminently curious in all things, great or small, picking them up and hiding them away, like that model thief, the raven ; not that they had any present value, but always with an eye to a *possible* advantage.

After another careful investigation of the horizon, he turned his attention to the scene that was going on upon the shore, which was rapidly assuming a more animated appearance. Groups of men, their long hair blowing about their faces, and their dark eyes gleaming beneath the broad brims of their hats, were collecting about the water's edge, while others, by paths similar to that lately travelled by Chiffon, were seen descending the face of the rocks. One of the latter came leaping lightly down the narrow path, singing one of their national ballads, or *complaints*, those singular productions, so characteristic of this peculiar people. He wore the huge brimmed hat, the long flowing dress, and the broad red sash of the Breton peasant ; but his face had the brown hue of health and travel ; his eyes the cheerful light, and his figure a jaunty carriage, that differed widely from the sombre aspect and sedate gait of the Breton whose life had been spent within sight of his own church steeple, and whose longest voyage had been within three miles of the coast.

He came upon Chiffon as that worthy had again halted, and was surveying a broken spar, to which

some fragments of cordage were attached, which lay half embedded in the sand at his feet. The singer,—for, though the singer had finished, the tune still clung about his lips—was about him, when Chiffon, looking up, called to him :

“ Holloa ! friend ! ”

The young man—and he looked younger than he was—halted, and turned to the valet.

“ That’s as it may be,” said he. “ I’ve lived too long, and seen too much, to accept that title from any lips that choose to use it.”

Chiffon laughed.

“ You’re not my enemy, I suppose.”

“ Not I ! or rather, as I said before, that’s as it may be.”

He approached Chiffon, who, still standing by the broken spar, began to rub his hands slowly together, and gazed fixedly in the other’s face.

“ I only make a friend of an honest man.”

Chiffon shrugged his shoulders, and raised his eyebrows.

“ Monsieur is eccentric ! his list cannot be extensive.

“ If you’re that,” the other went on, “ there’s always a welcome for you at my cottage ;” and he flung out his hand towards the brow of the cliff he had just descended ; “ a draught of comfortable liquor and a pipe of tobacco : a king could desire no more.”

Chiffon bowed.

“ But if you are one of these wolves,” and with a

rapid gesticulation he pointed to the several groups, "who live by murder and rapine, who are more cruel than the sea—for what that spares they destroy—why, I'd thank you to give me a wide berth, for I am apt to strike when I am angry."

"I know but little of the sea," began Chiffon.

"Nor do they," broke in the other. "Is it to know the sea, think you, to sit through the long night, watching for an opportunity to betray those whose home is upon its surface ; to place false lights in every window that looks seaward, and then listen for the welcome sound of the guns at sea—those cries of agony from the storm-tossed ship that tell of her great distress ?

"You speak of the wreckers : there are plenty on this coast !"

"Plenty !" and the young man's bronzed face flushed with indignation ; "were there but one, there would be that one too many. Man, woman, and child, they are all alike wreckers from their cradles. Yonder reef is a stone as precious to them as any in a king's crown\*—the vultures !"

"There was a ship in the Bay last night," said Chiffon."

\* The Bretons seem to consider the *bris* (wreck) as a sort of alluvial right. The terrible right of the *bris* was, as is well known, one of the most lucrative of privileges. The Viscount de Leon, alluding to a reef, said, "I have a stone there more precious than those which enrich a king's crown."—MICHELET.

"There was."

"She had a narrow escape, in such a storm, on such a coast, with such a people."

; The sailor—for such by his manner and aspect he was—in his turn looked hard at Chiffon.

"Last night as trim a brig as ever sailed upon the water lay there!" and he pointed towards the sea, "with many an honest heart beating high with life within her."

"And where is she now?" asked the valet, his former look of vexation stealing back to his face.

"Where? There!" and this time the sailor pointed to the broken spar at his feet. "That's a part of her; you'll find little more of her; the fragments were few and the thieves many."

"Wrecked?"

"That's about the largest part of her remaining (again he pointed to the spar). This reef has jaws of granite, and teeth of iron, and behind them, men still harder. If I'd my way, I'd make a gibbet of every bit of that ship's timber, and a scoundrel should dangle from each yard of her cordage."

"But you are Breton?" and Chiffon spoke this with an ill-concealed sneer. The sailor, without noticing it, drew himself up proudly.

"Of course I am! I was born at St. Pol: for twenty years I've wandered far and wide in the world; but in Brittany is my home, and I return to it as a bird returns to its nest."

"You don't spare the faults of your countrymen."

"*These* my countrymen ! and who are you, who judge of our Brittany by such a sample as these fishers of sea-weed and robbers of the dead afford ?"

"A stranger, as you might have guessed by my question," said the amiable Anatole, apologetically.

"Then know that a true Breton has an open hand for the stranger—not a knife for his throat ; a welcome, not a curse to the wanderer that distress has thrown upon his threshold. For my part, I'd sooner have pitched head-foremost from the summit of Cape Raz, which is three hundred feet above the sea, than have had a hand in the doings of last night."

Chiffon gave a look of inquiry.

"The ship broke from her anchorage, and was driven on to the shore. She might still have been saved, but false lights were hung out as a lure ; a light was fastened to a cow's horns, and so the demons, keeping the poor animal moving, enticed the brig right on to the beach."

"Sharp fellows."

"She was in splinters in no time ! I came down as the work of destruction was just finished. A wild cry—such a cry ! when there's no hope left in the heart, and the jaws of death close with a snap—told me where she was ; a flash of lightning showed me a dark object struggling in a shroud of foam : when the next flash came she was gone, and that was all I saw of the English brig."

"English ! are you sure she was English ?"

"Sure as my name's Paul Lebrun."

"Lebrun !"

"Isn't the name to your liking ? It was my father's, and I wouldn't change it for a Rohan's !"

But Monsieur Chiffon was far from disliking it ; his voice assumed its most silky tone, and his countenance its blandest expression.

"I am happy to make the acquaintance of Monsieur Paul Lebrun ; as a friend of Dominique Bonchamp I may claim—" he had got thus far when his outstretched hand was imprisoned in that of the sailor, who gave it such a "friendly" grip, as to bring tears into the valet's eyes, and he with difficulty suppressed a cry of pain.

"You, a friend of farmer Dominique ! and I, like a great sea bear, to hold off as I did !" He would again have taken Chiffon's hand, but that gentleman stepped back hastily. "Dominique Bonchamp is one of the best men in Brittany, which is as though I said the best in France ; and moreover, he has the prettiest daughter—"

"Humph ! Yvonne Bonchamp ?"

"Yes, Yvonne ; there's not a man within twenty miles, that is not envious of the flower of Bonchamp's farm, and would gladly transplant it to his own."

"Yvonne has many lovers."

"To look at her is to love her ; it's a fate."

"And loves in her turn but one."



"Who?" said the young sailor, with a certain fierceness of tone, which made Chiffon smile and shrug his shoulders.

"I am not in the confidence of the pretty Yvonne; others, perhaps, may be better informed."

"Not I!" and Paul Lebrun, still in some confusion, began to clear away the sand from the spar with his foot.

Chiffon mused.

"So Keroulas has a rival, and I have two. It's as well to calculate the opposition before making the attack." Then raising his voice—

"And all perished who were on board this English brig?"

"All but one."

"One! and where is he?"

"In Jalec's cottage, about a hundred yards along the shore; it's hidden like a sea-bird's nest, among the rocks."

"Have you seen him?" asked the valet, eagerly.

"I must have been blind if I had not, considering it was I who saved him from the waves—and, worse than the waves, those wolves that prowl about the shore."

"Of course you questioned him?"

"I did nothing of the kind; the man was bruised and bleeding, hurt to the death, they think; and moreover, I should not have understood a word he said, if he'd have talked till now."

“Why not?”

“He’s English—not that he can help that, poor fellow ; we’ve all our misfortunes.”

“You’ve been to England ; so Père Dominique told me?”

“Yes, I’ve been there ; was boxed up for years in one of their floating purgatories, where I learnt many things.”

“But not the language?”

“Certainly not ! they could’nt force *that* upon me ! I am content to speak with the tongue my mother gave me, and desire no other.”

“You are right, Monsieur Paul ; a multiplicity of tongues has always been productive of mischief, from Babel downwards ; but, as I would aid in the work of charity so well begun, I should like to speak with this man.”

“You ! I told you he was English !”

“And I answer that I speak his language.”

“You said you were a friend of Dominique Bonchamp ! a true Frenchman was ever the Englishman’s enemy.”

“And yet but a few hours ago you rescued this man from a grave, probably at the risk of your own life !”

Paul Lebrun was puzzled ; he rubbed his chin, and looked with a somewhat sheepish expression in the face of the valet.

“Why, you see, when a ship’s foundering, we lower

the boats, no matter what flag she hoists ; for a cry of distress is what we all understand, no matter whether it be uttered in English or French."

Again Monsieur Chiffon shrugged his shoulders.

"Pity it's so seldom replied to ; but," he answered, "I have no more love for England than you have ; my acquisition of the language was an accident, a happy one, as it has frequently proved. No, I have small love for a country that is even now sheltering the enemies of France."

"And who may they be ?"

"Her own sons. Would it be the first time an unfilial hand has been raised against a parent ?"

Paul looked at him in horror.

"I would have such a hand hewn from the wrist, whoever owned it."

"You but echo my own sentiments, and but prove the truth of Farmer Dominique's words, that you were a brave mariner and a good Breton."

The sailor's cheek flushed this time with pleasure.

"Père Dominique said that ! And Yvonne, was it before Yvonne he praised me thus ?"

"She echoed her father's praise. But there is not a man or woman," and Chiffon glanced from the corner of his twinkling eyes, "but does justice to the merits of Paul Lebrun !"

Chiffon had evidently adopted the policy, though not the side, espoused by the great Tallérand, whose reputation for—what shall we say—diplomacy, was at

its height. Paul Lebrun, after several outward attempts to appear unembarrassed, roosting like a fowl, first upon one leg and then the other, burst into a laugh, and turned the conversation by asking the name of his new acquaintance.

"Anatole Chiffon, confidential secretary to the Baron d'Aubigny."

"Then you can tell me if it will be long before Monsieur le Baron is here. Jalec went up to the Maison d'Aubigny some hours ago, to announce the wreck of the brig, and that one of the crew, feared to be mortally injured, was lying in his cottage."

"*Diable!*" muttered Chiffon between his teeth; "was there no nearer succour at hand, that the Baron must be disturbed by such news?"

"Succour was not required; but one of the brig's boats landed some strangers at the commencement of the storm last night, and Jalec thought that they might know something about the poor wretch who has been so cruelly mauled by that rib-breaker yonder," and he shook his fist in the direction of the reef.

"Where is Jalec's cottage?"

"In the first bend of the cliffs; there's been a fall of rock within a yard or so of it. The sea has a hungry tooth about there."

"A pleasant residence. I will see this poor man. I speak his language indifferently well, and have some little knowledge of surgery."

"It will avail him but little, I fear. However, though I have business of my own elsewhere, I will accompany you back ; as you say, it is but right to sacrifice ourselves for a fellow-creature."

"Did I say that?"

"I suppose you meant it, for—"

"Well, well, I always mean what I say ; but I presume this unfortunate man is not unattended?"

"Jalec's wife is attending upon him."

"Then, with your permission, I will proceed thither alone. I have already wasted too much of your time, Monsieur Paul, to rob you of more."

"For the matter of that, it's no robbery, being cheerfully given. Nor is my business so pressing that I need be chary of my company ; 'twas but to give *bon jour* to Père Dominique, who is sure to come down to the beach when he hears of the evil doings of last night."

"Nay, it is possible he is already somewhere at hand ; for I passed him on my road with his daughter."

"Yvonne!"

"Yes, Yvonne—looking prettier than ever ; and so I'll wager thought her foster-brother, Keroulas, by the attention he lavished upon her."

"The face of Paul Lebrun grew dark as night, his gaiety had fled—the sun was hidden by that blackest of clouds—jealousy.

"Keroulas ! was he with her?"

"So, as your friends are in good company, I will not refuse your's, that is so kindly proffered."

"Your pardon, Monsieur Chiffon, but I have other business, pressing business, that I had forgot. Jalec's is close at hand, you cannot miss it; besides, you're sure to find half-a-dozen gossips about the door;" and, with a hurried adieu, Paul Lebrun started off in the direction which, by a move of the hand, Chiffon had indicated as the path by which the Breton farmer and his daughter would descend to the beach. Chiffon looked after him for a moment, gently rubbing his hands and laughing inwardly.

"So the song has left your lips, my young skimmer of the seas; and jealousy has hung a weight upon your heart that was so feather-light before—and will be feather-light again—for the wounds love makes quickly heal, however deep at first: lasting no longer than the furrow that follows a ship's keel." Then turning upon his heel, he changed the current of his thoughts; "I wonder whether this Englishman has life enough left in him to answer a few civil questions—let him but answer them correctly, and they may put him back over the cliff again if they like, with a sail for his shroud, and the sea for his coffin."

With this charitable observation, Monsieur Anatole Chiffon bent his steps toward's Jalec's cottage.

Some two hours after, a party of gentlemen rode up to Jalec's door; the party consisted of the Baron, his two guests, and the Chevalier: they were met at

the threshold by the fisherman's wife ; she shook her head as the gentlemen dismounted.

"Dead?" asked the Baron, with an expression of much anxiety.

"Dead!" ejaculated Etienne Marcel ; "poor fellow—the fishermen said he was badly hurt—it is a happy release."

"Very happy," said the Chevalier, drily. There was something in the tone that made Etienne Marcel turn to look at the face of the speaker ; it was nearly as sunshiny as usual—the only change was a slight, very slight, shade of compassion.

"These butterflies," said Marcel to himself, as he entered the cottage, "have neither curiosity nor thought about the business of the world—it may wag whichever way it pleases as long as they are allowed to gather honey from its flowers. The woman had removed the sheet, and Marcel, who, with the Baron, had been the first to dismount, gazed for a few seconds on the corpse.

"Poor fellow! a cruel fate!" He turned to the woman, "When did he die?"

"Scarcely an hour ago." A few more inquiries, and after a liberal donation to the woman, the gentlemen prepared to remount, proposing to ride along the beach. The Baron spoke aside to Marcel—

"You have recognised him."

"He was the second officer on board ; a brave man, and a skilful seaman."

“Heaven receive him !”

“Amen ! yet am I thankful he has had speech with none that could understand his language ; for then his death might have been the prelude to many others. Our lives are—”

“Hush !” the Baron pointed to some women who were clustering about the threshold, gazing inquisitively within.

Etienne Marcel nodded and was silent—they remounted and rode away, leaving, as Marcel significantly said, Death behind them in the cottage.



## CHAPTER IV

EUGENIE AND YVONNE. KEROULAS RELATES A STORY,  
AND THE READER MAKES A DISCOVERY.

“ You love Keroulas ?”

Yvonne raised her calm eyes, and looked her questioner in the face.

“ Undoubtedly, he is my foster-brother.”

“ Do we always wish to wed our foster-brothers ?”

“ Wed ! Indeed, Mademoiselle, I had no such thought ; though—” and again her eyes met steadfastly those of her companion—“ I know of no reason why I should not wed Keroulas, if my father approved.”

“ And if he did not approve ?”

“ I should not marry at all.”

“ But your father does approve ?”

“ I do not know,” she hesitated ; “ he did, but now—” she hesitated again, “ I do not know.”

“ I see ; fathers are sometimes hard to please ; but if your heart approves, you are old enough to act for yourself.”

“ Oh ! Mademoiselle Eugenie, Heaven will not smile upon a marriage that lacks the blessing of a parent.”

Eugenie d'Aubigny started, as moved by some sudden emotion, then bent her tall figure over Yvonne, who was seated at her feet, and kissed her cheek.

“ You are a little saint, my Yvonne, and, therefore, too good for this earth. I lose my self-content, sometimes, when I sit beside you. I have mixed with the world—a corrupt and bad world—that would soil even the brightness of an angel's wings.”

“ You have suffered, Mademoiselle ?”

Eugenie was silent for a moment, and pushed back from her eyes, which were glistening with tears, the loose braids of her fair and lustrous hair. “ I have suffered—even in my cradle, Yvonne ; I received the baptism of sorrow, and sorrow ages quicker than time. I lived to see myself an exile, my father a proscribed fugitive ; and my mother, my loved mother, a martyr on the scaffold.”

“ She is in heaven,” said Yvonne, gently.

Mademoiselle d'Aubigny's voice deepened into a fiercer music, and she clenched her small hands convulsively, till the knuckles showed white even through the pearly skin that covered them.

“ May the souls of those accursed monsters never enter its blissful gates ! May—” She paused, for Yvonne had caught the raised hands in hers and pressed them to her bosom.

“Mademoiselle Eugenie! my father has often told me how your blessed mother died. Her last words were—oh! surely *you* have not forgotten them—‘forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us!’”

Eugenie d’Aubigny was silent, the fierce light waned from her eyes, and, soft as twilight, the gentle and loving soul of the woman looked forth. But a minute before, with head erect, compressed lip, and nostril curved, she seemed a Juno, regal in her rage; but now, the eyes, brown as the autumn leaves, or pebbles seen through the liquid light of a running brook, were tender as a dove’s; and the ripe lips parted to embrace more gently, as though repentant of the harsh words they had uttered: it was still the face of a queen; but seen thus it was the face of Aphrodite, the bright-haired queen of love.

“Have I not said truly that you are a saint, my Yvonne?”

Yvonne laughed—one of those pleasant laughs that so refresh the jaded brain to hear—a laugh that leaps from the lips rejoicing from its silvery clearness, as a mountain rivulet that dances through a myriad of flowers.

“You should tell Paul Lebrun that, if you would make him angry.\* He declares that saints are only

\* It may be as well here to remind the reader of that cordial intercourse which has always existed between the resident Breton aristocracy and the people. The difference in social position is

made to live apart from the rest of us, and shut themselves up between four stone walls, till they are taken bodily up to heaven," here Yvonne crossed herself, "as being too good for this world—while a woman's mission is just to make the earth as much like heaven as she can, by staying as long as possible in it."

"And who is Paul Lebrun? another lover?—why, Yvonne, you are turning the heads of all our honest Bretons!"

Yvonne answered, and without a blush, "Paul Lebrun is a lover of mine, for he never loses an opportunity to tell me so; I could not love him, even if I so desired; he is so wild, too accustomed to a roving life, to contentedly settle down in one of our quiet Breton homes."

"You are right, Yvonne; a man who cares only for self, and his own wild fancies, will make but a bad husband."

"But you mistake me, Mademoiselle. Such a man must not be thought of when we speak of Paul Lebrun. There is not a Breton on the coast but is proud of Paul being his countryman; he is as brave as a lion—though every Breton may claim to be that—and, nevertheless, as kind and gentle as if he carried the heart of a woman beneath the breast of a man."

understood, but its acknowledgment is unaccompanied by those absurd forms and ceremonies that create so much bitterness between the different classes.

“ You speak his praises warmly—how if Keroulas should hear you ?”

“ Keroulas would have naught to fear. I but speak the truth ; nor would it be Keroulas, did he desire me to do otherwise. It was but two nights since, during that dreadful storm, that Paul, after fastening a rope about him, sprang out into the raging sea, to save the unfortunate man who died in Jalec’s cottage, who was then being tossed about by the waves like a plaything upon the fearful reef !”

Again the angry light was in Eugenie’s eyes as she said, “ Do not let us speak of that night—such doings are the shame of Brittany. Well have they named it the bay of death: for not a week passes, scarcely a day in the rough weather, without the bodies of murdered men being cast upon the beach.”

“ Murdered ! Mademoiselle !”

“ Cruelly, cowardly murdered ! The lights that flash through the darkness, promising safety, are but so many corpsc-candles that burn over the seaman’s grave.”

Yvonne shuddered: she had heard too much of the fearful doings on this savage coast to venture a word in behalf of its savage inhabitants.\*

“ Could not Monsieur le Baron do something ?”

\* The whole coast is a graveyard, sixty vessels are wrecked upon it every winter. The sea is English at heart, she loves not France, but dashes our ships to pieces, and blocks up our harbours with sand.—*Michelet*.

"I fear not; the men of the coast claim the *bris* (wreck) as their right; and what a Breton deems his right few would venture to be the first to wrest from him."

"But this right is wrong!"

"Protected by custom. We live in stormy times, my father says—and to bring our own ships safely to shore, we must be patient, and wait and suffer, till the appointed time has come."

Eugenie and Yvonne were seated on a rustic bench, near the great terrace that looked down upon the garden of the chateau, and down the terrace steps a young peasant hastily descended; he doffed his broad-brimmed hat as he approached the ladies, bowed to Eugenie, and glanced from the corner of his eye at Yvonne, whose cheek had for the first time deepened its colour, as she rose to meet him.

"Keroulas!"

"Yvonne!" the Breton took a step towards her, then remembering himself, shook his long hair about his hot cheeks and again made his obeisance to Mademoiselle d'Aubigny.

"Père Dominique sent me over to Monsieur le Baron with a present of milk and eggs. Monsieur le Baron told me that Yvonne was with you, Mademoiselle; and I thought—that is, Monsieur le Baron thought—I could accompany Yvonne back to the farm: before she could reach it, evening will have set in—and—and, it is possible—that—that—"

“That those mischievous dwarfs, the *Courils*\* may be about, and Keroulas Carnac would rather that Yvonne Bonchamp danced with no one but himself.”

There was a look of good-humoured mischief in the Breton’s eyes as he answered the laughing Eugenie.

“But a week ago, Monsieur Victor was like to have killed the young Parisian Count, who insisted upon dancing with Mademoiselle during the *fête* at Ponta Croix !”

It was now Eugenie’s turn to blush ; the red blood mounted into her cheeks and burnt through its transparent veil.

“The Count presumed upon a short acquaintance, and Monsieur de Preville chastised his impertinence.”

The young Breton with natural tact hastened to change the subject.

“It would ill become me in anything to criticise the actions of M. de Preville ; it is to his father, the Chevalier, I owe my life.”

“My father has often said so ; but I have not, as yet, heard how it was done. I have twice questioned the Chevalier ; and he, true to his custom, turns off the question with a jest, or tells me some romantic rigmarole, that he laughs at as an impromptu fiction some few minutes afterwards.”

“It was an act I shall not forget, Mademoiselle ; thus it was : I was out, as we all were—boys as well

\* *Courils*. See note to first chapter, p. 5.

as men—against the *Blues*,\* but the fortune of war had everywhere turned against us; the swords and bayonets of the spoilers were red with the best blood of Brittany, and the firebrand was passed from cottage to cottage, till not a night went by but the sky was reddened by the flames of burning villages. It was a fearful time, but a brave one,” and the swarthy face of the peasant assumed a yet darker hue, while his knitted brow and clenched hands showed the power of the remembrance. Eugenie gazed on him for a moment, then motioned him to proceed, saying—

“It *was* a brave time,—such a time may come again, let us hope with a happier result.”

“Amen!” Keroulas crossed himself devoutly and continued—“I fought under Georges Cadougal† in the Morbihan and Cotes-du-Nord—was left for dead on the plain of Grand Champ,—and, still worse, was taken prisoner at Elven. They sent me, with twenty captured Chouans, to Paris, to give ‘information,’ as they called it; one only was false to his country, nineteen

\* The Republican troops.

† Georges Cadougal, the celebrated Chouan leader. He was the son of a poor miller of Auray, in Lower Brittany; an inflexible “legitimist,” he waged a gallant but unsuccessful war against the Republicans for many years. He was executed on the 25th of June, 1804, in his thirty-fifth year, meeting his fate with the same intrepidity that had distinguished his life. “His mind,” said Napoleon, “was cast in the true mould: in my hands he would have done great things. I know how to appreciate his firmness of character.”



remained firm, and so we were condemned to die. We were not much moved by that, for mercy was the last thing we expected from their parricidal hands ; and so our minds were made up to the worst. But as fortune would have it, Monsieur le Chevalier, who was in Paris at the time, had recognised me during the trial as one who had been born upon his estate, and after making application in vain to the judges, set about in another way to obtain my release."

"He applied to the First Consul, or to Fouche?"

The Breton laughed.

"I had got into prison through the might of steel,—I escaped from it through the might of gold. One night,—it was the night before the day fixed for my execution,—the jailor, in closing the cell, had forgotten to remove the key from the door,—the same accident occurred to that at the end of the corridor, and the soldier who guarded the outer one of all was asleep, so sound asleep, that though I stumbled twice, for my limbs were cramped, I failed to awake him."

"A heavy sleeper !" said Eugenie.

Again the Breton laughed.

"And a conscientious one—he was to sleep at the rate of a louis a minute,—he had only received five of the former, yet he slept a good ten of the latter,—and I got safe into the street."

"And the Chevalier de Preville did this?"

"He did, and more ; he had me safely conveyed to

Brittany, till my pardon—though I had committed no crime but what I would gladly commit again—was granted. ‘I have done you a service,’ said the Chevalier, ‘I may, one of these days, require one of you.’”

“And you promised, of course?”

“I gave no promise, Mademoiselle, for none was necessary; he knew Keroulas Carnac, and was satisfied. I owe the Chevalier a life, and it is his, should he want it.”

Yvonne had risen from the seat, and touching the Breton’s arm, pointed to the sun, that was rapidly disappearing beneath the horizon.

“Mademoiselle will pardon me if I take my leave; the darkness comes on so swiftly, and it is ill journeying when the light of heaven is shut out.”

“Beside, Keroulas would rather meet a regiment of *Blues*, than half-a-dozen of these dancing dwarfs who—”

“Hush! Mademoiselle d’Aubigny, do not speak lightly of the *Courils*! it is ill jesting when trouble may be even now lying in wait for us, and sorrow plucking at our elbow.”

The superstitious peasant said this in so solemn a voice that at any other time Eugenie would have laughed; but she herself seemed struck with a foreboding, and was silent.

Yvonne pressed Mademoiselle d’Aubigny’s hand to her lips, who, in return, kissed her affectionately on both cheeks. Keroulas made a respectful obeisance,

then drew the young maiden's arm within his own, and moved off in the direction of a narrow path that was cut through the thick underwood, and led from the garden, or park, into the road.

Eugenie watched them till they had disappeared ; then, with a heavy sigh, walked slowly away, penetrating deeper into the umbrageous recesses of the garden ; a melancholy shade had fallen upon the young face, and she murmured half aloud—

“Dear Yvonne, may neither care nor blight fall upon your young life,—and may Keroulas, as he has already to others proved himself to be a true man, prove to you as true a lover !” Again she sighed, “Ah ! me. I have borne much of suffering, and borne it without complaint ; but this daily deceit—this secret which every day, every hour, against my reason, my tongue threatens to betray, is weighing me to the earth. A thousand times have I thought it better that my father should know all ; and yet his sense of honour—his word, so solemnly pledged to another—his hope by such an union to retrieve the falling fortunes of our house ; no, I dare not ! dare not ! Alas ! I know not what to think, or do. I must, like that poor princess in the English play, still ‘love and be silent !’ ”

She was now standing in a small dell, on every side thickly encompassed with trees whose branches interlaced themselves above her head, when footsteps were heard upon the dry leaves, which lay inches thick

upon the ground ; and then a well-known voice met her ear, calling her name. She turned in the direction from whence it came, the sweet dove-like look settled in her eyes ; and in a voice full of the heart's music, she answered " Victor !"

The branches were pushed apart outside, and Victor de Preville, springing down the bank, stood by her side,

" Eugenie ! My wife !"

" My husband !" Her arms were thrown about his neck, her cheek pressed against his, then she started back and coloured from neck to brow. Victor was not alone ; the branches were again pushed aside, and his companion appeared upon the top of the bank.

" The Abbé de Chateau Vieux !"

" Pardon, Madame de Preville !" said the new comer, with a laughing significance, as he leaped lightly down, and bowed before the lady with all the grace of the *ancien regime*. " By your leave, I will introduce myself as a merchant, about to make a trading tour in Brittany—one Etienne Marcel."

## CHAPTER V

## A PEEP INTO THE BARON'S STUDY—SUSPICIONS.

IN the left wing of the old maison d'Aubigny, are situated the private apartments of the Baron : these three rooms—a sleeping-room, a study, and an antechamber—constituted, as he would often laughingly say to his friend the Chevalier, the only portion of his possessions that he could really call his own—friends and servants alike respecting the tabooed threshold. Chiffon alone, in his double capacity of valet and secretary—though his secretaryship was by no means of the confidential character he asserted it to be,—having a right of entrance to the Baron's apartments ; a right, however, that he but seldom used, excepting when his attendance was required by his master—a self-denial which, considering the valet's well-known habit of prying into all things that did *not* concern him, excited no little astonishment in the d'Aubigny household.

The Baron's study was a large vaulted room, hung round with tapestry so old, that the subjects—scrip-

tural or otherwise—set forth upon it, had entirely disappeared ; the many-hued threads presenting a sombre though chaotic surface of colour in those places where the tapestry remained entire : the whole, however, was fast resolving itself to dust, as, centuries ago, had the taper fingers of the high-born ladies whose well-tutored skill had fashioned it. Several large presses, containing many a time-hallowed document pertaining to the d'Aubigny family, stood around, the wood-work of which was in nearly the same state of decay as the tapestry. The great high-backed chairs were piled with books ; and not only were their seats thus littered with learning, but their rheumatic or gouty legs were almost hidden by a perfect sea of dusty volumes that surged everywhere about the floor. Near the one great window that looked out upon a thick shrubbery, stood a massive bureau—an ancient piece of brass-bound furniture—before which the male d'Aubigny's for many a generation had sat, till it came to be considered by the family as a sort of household friend, not to be discarded for any more graceful or even more convenient modern innovation. It was a very mysterious affair, being full of all kinds of intricate devices and out-of-the-way places of concealment in the shape of wells and drawers, only to be discovered by means of carefully-hidden springs. It is related that an overbusy servant, who had once stolen into the room to polish up the old bureau's dingy exterior, had by chance touched one of these springs, whereupon

such an opening of unlooked-for doors, such a darting out of undreamt-of drawers ensued, that, dropping her duster with a scream, the girl fled from the room, and could never again be tempted to enter it. Before this bureau sat the Baron—his elbow upon the raised desk, and his head resting upon his hand—his brow was knitted as in deep but unpleasant thought, and his eyes were rivetted upon some papers that lay in a heap before him. Suddenly arousing himself he took up the papers one by one, and, drawing the lamp, for it was evening far advanced, towards him, carefully examined their seals; this done, he threw himself back in the chair, the same puzzled look still upon his face.

“It cannot be!” he said at last, “it is impossible! None but Chiffon has admittance here—and de Preville has vouched for his honesty; besides, this lock is of a peculiar and English manufacture; any attempt to open it, otherwise than with the proper key, would only injure the wards and make detection certain: the key never quits my person, and its duplicate cannot be found in France.” Again he examined each seal, and with the same result. “They are as when I sealed them, not a crack or flaw; and yet, I would have sworn that the position of the packets had been altered: this small one, for instance, I remember yesterday placing nearly at the bottom of the pile, the corner pushed under the silken thread of the larger packet, and this evening it is most unaccountably at the top!” He rose, opened his vest, took out a small key attached to

his neck by a long thin ribbon, then leant across the desk, and touched first one spring, then another ; and sliding his fingers along the apparently solid wood, pushed back a small panel and discovered a secret drawer, he fitted the key to the lock, shooting and re-shooting the bolt.

“ It's strange ! the wards are certainly uninjured—it never acted better. I must have been mistaken. Heaven forbid ! I should even in thought wrongfully accuse an innocent man.”

The Baron closed the drawer, locked it, and then—it was a habit with him—strode up and down the room, his hands tightly locked behind him.

“ And yet, I must be cautious—de Preville may be deceived. Yes, yes, there is need of caution in such a game as this I am engaged in—a game in which all is at stake—my fortune and my head !” He drew a long breath. “ Poor Eugenie ! may it please God to preserve both for her sake. Alas ! he who wages the war of kings and dynasties must abide the peril, for it is one in which the weaker must ever go to the wall ; and, like the two pots in the fable, the finer the porcelain the sooner it is broken. It is a bold throw, but it must be made ; if the rising is general, it would ill-become the Baron d'Aubigny to remain idle, when king and country alike solicit his aid. Caution ! *pardieu* ! if that wily fox Fouché got but wind of such a plot, some estates would change owners and some heads part company from the shoulder ! Chateaucieux must de-



part to-morrow for Nantes, and then cross the Loire into La Vendée ; he will find there a soil ripe enough for revolt, for in every desolated town, on the site of every vanished village, and among the ashes of each ruined homestead, the fire of revenge is smouldering—a breath, and it starts into a devouring flame. Dupont must keep along the coast to Quimper, and there await the promised instructions from England. England !”—here the Baron muttered something very like an oath, “small trust will Breton or Vendean place in English promises ! It matters little to England whether royalist or republican has the upper-hand ; her strength lies in our weakness, and as long as we cut each others throats she will lend us money to do it. Bah ! this is the country of Duguesclin, and no armed Englishman can ever tread it but as an enemy.” As the Baron who was by no means free from some of the prejudices of his time, said this, some one knocked at the outside of the door of the antechamber : the knock was repeated three times, and the Baron hastened into the antechamber, returning with his guests Dupont and Etienne Marcel, or, as we shall now call him, the Abbé Chateauxvieux. When the two latter were seated, the Baron, who had remained standing, took the sealed packets from the bureau, and said—

“You see I am quite prepared, and should advise your departure about an hour before sunrise. I have cared that you shall have good horses in place of the sorry jades that brought you from the coast the other

night ; these are the best in my stables, and you are not the men to let the grass grow under their feet."

"Before sunrise ! may not our departure at such an early hour excite suspicion ?" The Baron laughed.

"You forget, Chateaufieux, you are in Brittany, and not in Paris ; besides, it is my intention to accompany you some leagues. I have business at Loudiac, and some part of the road we may travel together."

"We shall be rejoiced, my dear Baron ; our journey will appear shorter by that number of leagues."

The Baron bowed, then handed to each of his visitors several of the sealed papers. "The gentlemen, to whom these are addressed, will give not only a warm welcome to the envoys of our king, but all the information you may require concerning the feeling in their neighbourhood. In a few days, by such means, you may feel the pulse of the country, and hasten or delay your plans accordingly. You, Chateaufieux, will proceed to Nantes. You will find among these papers a letter to a Monsieur Raymond, a hemp merchant."

"A good trade !" said the Abbé, *en parenthese*, "and, should we get the upper hand of these varlets, likely to become an extensive one."

The Baron went on.

"He will be able to speak as to the feeling of the men of his class ; they must have short memories if they can look at the Loire, as it rushes by their city, and not wish well to their exiled king."

“The Loire ! the river of the *Noyades* !\* each wave it rolls towards the sea is a tongue that speaks of republican crime, and craves for the return of Louis.”

The Baron shook his head sadly.

“Or speaks a warning against again rashly calling down so cruel a punishment ; but that is scarcely to be dreaded, for, though I hate this man who now rides triumphant upon the neck of France, he is neither cruel nor—”

“Well, I cross from Nantes into La Vendée,” interrupted the Abbé, the dark shade settling upon his face, for he was a “good hater,” and was not one to praise an enemy—“a country both religious and loyal.”

“They cling to their habits, like all of us, Chateauvieux. What you would denominate their superstition, custom has made a religion. You may sweep away every vestige of the past from the soil of Brittany, but you cannot shake the Breton’s fixed ideas. ‘I will overthrow your steeples,’ said the republican St. André to the mayor of one of our villages, ‘in order that no object may remain to recal your superstitions.’ ‘You will still be forced to leave us the stars,’ replied the peasant ; ‘and they may be seen

\* The terrible “drownings of Nantes,” commanded by the sanguinary Carrier, a man “whose excesses,” as was said, “dishonoured terror itself.” His victims were enclosed in the holds of ships ; at a given signal valves were opened, and the waves of the Loire swallowed them up. By these means hundreds were destroyed at a time.

from a greater distance than our steeples !”\* A good cause will make a hero of a peasant ; a bad one will often make a coward of a prince,—that is, if he knew it to be so. Our peasantry, Breton and Vendean, wish to remain unmolested—to remain in everything as their fathers were before them. The republic came upon them suddenly—it sought to shake ideas that were with them not to be shaken—to cast aside old customs, whose roots were twined about the heart—their *Lares* and *Penates* were threatened—so they one and all snatched up the musket to defend them.”

“Then you think they have sunk into a sluggish sleep, and are not again to be aroused?”

“I did not say that. Show them a cause—”

“What greater can I show than that of the Lord’s anointed—Louis, their king?”

“To men like ourselves, possibly none greater ; but the peasant, before he again risks his little all, must know that unless he does so, his rights may again be invaded and himself torn from his home to be marched to the frontier.”

“I understand,” said the Abbé ; while his companion, Dupont, who was of a taciturn nature, simply nodded his approval.

“Our peasants shrink from such forced military service ; and, had it not pleased the republic to command a levy of 300,000 men, La Vendée might have

remained quiet and escaped the storm that has devastated it."

"And you think this compulsory service likely to be again insisted upon?" asked Chateauvieux.

"I do."

"Good!" said the Abbé; and Dupont grunted his assent.

"The First Consul, as it has pleased them to term him, wants men—they are the counters without which he cannot play out his game, and—"

"And that game is?"

"Empire!"

The Abbé Chateauvieux mused. Dupont shrugged his shoulders.

"I know this M. Buonaparte well. He is a determined, self-concentrated man: nothing is too high for his ambition, and no obstacle too great for him to hesitate at its removal—a man of iron, with a steady and unswerving will."

"My dear Baron, is it possible I hear you praising—?"

"An enemy, you would say—why not? Yet, I do not praise him. I but act as the wrestler, who takes in all the points of his adversary before closing with him. To take advantage of a man's weakness, you must also know wherein lies his strength."

Chateauvieux, who, with Dupont, had carefully placed in their vests the papers given to them by the Baron, now drew a paper from a small leathern case

and presented it to the Baron, who received it with some reverence.

"You will there find, under the signature of His Majesty, full instructions, my dear Baron, for you to act in this part of Brittany—should the news we send you from the south, and La Vendée, prove as good as we anticipate and desire."

"Till then—"

"I need not say keep it carefully concealed. Such a document would gain for the fortunate knave who might chance upon it a rich estate at least, and for the unfortunate gentleman whose name is mentioned therein—a halter."

"Monsieur l'Abbé !"

"Pardon me, my dear Baron, I forgot what is due to men of family, like ourselves. Keep up the difference of class, by all means. Let me see : thus it stands—for the noble, the block—for the peasant, the gallows—and for those who occupy the medium position, like our friend Dupont, a well directed shot—"

"Bah !" said the latter gentleman, for the first time breaking silence. "It will find me with a weapon in my hands ; this is the twenty-third conspiracy I've been engaged in, and have never seen the inside of a prison yet !"

"Don't boast, *mon ami* ! I shall see you behind the bars yet," said the Abbé, who, utterly reckless of danger himself, was never so happy as when sporting within its jaws—his spirits rising in proportion as a

peril increased. But the Baron, a man of tried courage, was annoyed at this unseasonable levity, and said—

“You are a lonely and childless man, Etienne; what kith and kin you have can well protect themselves, and did your head roll upon the scaffold to-morrow, many might grieve, there are none but yourself the headsman’s stroke would kill; but I have a daughter, far dearer to me than life—without me there are none to protect her—it is her life then I hazard with my own.”

The Abbé looked up quickly, as about to speak—then checked himself, and remained silent.

“I grant she is affianced to the Count de Marigny; but he is in exile, and it may be long before the contract is fulfilled.”

“Very long,” thought the Abbé—but he said nothing.

“And with death comes confiscation, and I would not have Marigny accept a dowerless wife. Not that he whose father was my earliest friend and the soul of honour, would hesitate—of that, I’m sure.”

The Abbé, whose knowledge of the young Count’s principles and habits were of a somewhat more recent date than the Baron’s, was not so sure—but he was a wise man, and still said nothing.

“So you see, Chateauxvieux, with us the case is different; and where—in your case—I would—nay have—marched up to the mouth of a cannon, I would

now, honour permitting, step a pace or two aside for the ball to pass me. Confessing such to be my feelings, I have risked all—life, daughter, happiness—in the cause of my king and country ; but would thank you to keep your hints about axes and halters to yourself,—it is time enough to bestow thought on them when you're under the one, or about to be tied to the other.”

The Abbé Chateaufvieux rose to his feet, and grasped the Baron's hand, “Right, old comrade ! and I ask pardon for such foolish jesting. You say well ; like the snail, I carry my house upon my back, and should leave few or none—excepting yourself, perhaps—to grieve for me. For your daughter—and no man in France can boast a richer possession than Mademoiselle Eugénie—be sure,” and he wrung the Baron's hand warmly, “whatever betide, she will have a protector.”

“You mean Marigny ?”

“Marigny will be a happier man than he deserves,” was the Abbé's evasive answer ; “besides, there is one protector who never deserts the pure and good.”

The Baron bowed his head reverentially, and, for a moment, the three gentlemen were silent—it was a painful silence, and Chateaufvieux was the first to break it.

“With your permission, Dupont and I will return to our apartments. We have some arrangements to make ere we again descend to the *salon*—when, as we shall be stirring so early in the morning, we must make our *adieux* to Mademoiselle.”



"Stay!" The Abbé and his friend were moving towards the door, "I will summon my valet, and—"

"Do nothing of the kind!" said Chateauvieux, quickly, "I am not enraptured with the aspect of your Monsieur Chiffon."

The Baron started.

"Have you been long the possessor of his invaluable services?"

"Two years; sufficient to know a man."

"Humph! not such a man as I take Monsieur Chiffon to be. Pardon my questioning you thus,—but had he a recommendation to your service?"

"The best; he was recommended—and strongly recommended—by my friend, de Preville."

"The Chevalier is a light and thoughtless man—who gives little or no care to anything. He would as carelessly pass his word for Chiffon, or any other, if it gave him no trouble to do so—as he would risk his money, if he had any, upon a throw of the dice-box.

Again the Baron spoke, with anger—and this time the honest blood rushed to his cheeks.

"Silence, Chateauvieux! remember you are beneath my roof, and it is of my friend you speak! from boyhood I have known de Preville—and ever found him thoughtless, if you will, but honourable and generous to a fault!"

"Exactly so, d'Aubigny! I agree in all you say about the Chevalier; but it is this self-same generosity to a fault, which you allow him to possess, that would

lead me to doubt his recommendation of a person like your eccentric-looking valet. The character of the Chevalier a child might fathom, it is all upon the surface ; now, Monsieur Chiffon's runs deep, and—"

"What are you about?" broke in the Baron, laughing in spite of himself, "are you making a comparison between my friend and my valet?"

"Certainly not." The Abbé now spoke with something of hauteur. "The Chevalier de Preville is a gentleman—"

"While you think poor Chiffon to be—?"

"A scoundrel!"

And with a friendly *au revoir* the Abbé and his friend left the apartment.

The Baron gazed after them,—then breathed a heavy sigh as he turned towards the bureau, and said—"Strange fellow, Chateauvieux—as brave as the lion, yet as cunning as the fox—just the man for a cause like ours. His attachment to the king is unconquerable, and his love of conspiracy and intrigue equally ardent ; such energetic earnest men make no allowance for a feather-brain, like de Preville, who takes the world as it comes, and will leave it neither better nor worse than he found it."

The Baron had touched the spring and put by the panel, when he paused—holding the precious paper given him by Chateauvieux irresolutely in his hand—"It is strange, too, how his suspicions concerning Chiffon came, as it were, like an echo to my own. 1

dare not mention this to de Preville, he will turn the whole affair into a jest, and banter me for a week after about my ‘demon’ of a valet—terming him Robespierre *redivivus*, or Fouché the second—with a world of similar nonsense. Yet the interests concerned are far too grave to induce me to run any hazard with this fellow, who Chateauvieux so much dislikes. Ah! I have it, I will state my suspicions frankly to Victor, and he shall make some closer inquiries into the antecedents of this man than his father has done: not but that the man has served me well for two years, but—” the Baron paused a moment, then closed the drawer and shut the panel—“precaution is the mother of safety, and before I again trust to the old hiding-place, my suspicions must be removed, till then I shall use another.” So saying the Baron—the little paper still in his hand—crossed the room, and entered his bed-chamber, closing the door behind him.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE BARON TAKES VICTOR INTO HIS CONFIDENCE—  
KEROULAS—THE PLOT THICKENS.

"It was from Monsieur de Nangis that my father received Chiffon, as a consignment, and, according to his letter of recommendation, a valuable one."

"De Nangis! I remember he was one of the first that fell in the September massacre."

"No, that was his brother. My father's friend was not so fortunate; he died from the effects of a wound received in the Palais Royal in a quarrel of some kind, arising out of I know not what. De Nangis left his opponent dead on the spot—dying himself, some hours afterwards, in a room of the Café Foy, to which place his friends had carried him."

"Truly a sad end for a brave man—but Chiffon?"

"Was by his master's side when he breathed his last: a week afterwards he presented himself at the Chateau Pontarlac, with the written request of De Nangis in his hand."

"I must have been mistaken,—yet things have occurred, Victor, to arouse my suspicion; and, I confess, to shake my trust in this man."

The Baron and Victor were standing in a recess formed by one of the large windows of the *salon* d'Aubigny, the large curtains screening them from the company assembled in the room.

"You both alarm and surprise me, Baron!"

"Thus the case stands, Victor,—for I can have no reserve with one who I have learnt to regard almost as a son," and he laid his hand affectionately upon the young man's shoulder,—“You have lived long enough in the world to know that we all have our secrets—you have yours.” It was fortunate the heavy curtain shut out the light, or Victor's startled look could scarcely have escaped the Baron, who went on—“I have mine. What they are, you, not being a woman, will not care to inquire: suffice it, they are secrets of an importance to others as well as myself, and therefore require upon my part a double care. You understand me?”

Victor bowed.

"You know the old bureau in my study—that piece of antiquity you were but the other day admiring so much—"

Victor bowed again.

"Well, that has its secrets also—which, until lately, I had believed known only to myself. It was my habit to entrust all my more important papers to

its keeping, with the same confidence as one would his life in the hands of a long-trying and trusty servant. As I have said, it is only lately that I have had reason to suspect that my secrets are no longer my own; in short, that the 'open, sesame!' has been discovered."

"A domestic traitor! oh! impossible! I cannot believe that any one would be so base, to bite the hand that feeds—to betray the owner of the roof that shelters him."

The Baron smiled at the young man's indignation, though it pleased him.

"You are still young, Victor; yet a moment's reflection, and you will remember the times in which we live—how few years have passed since the son eyed with suspicion the father, and the father, terrified by that one dread word '*suspect*,' looked askance at the son, since a brother\* ascended the tribune, and added a fratricidal vote to those that doomed the sainted Louis to the block! Where ties of kindred have proved so weak, shall ties of gratitude be regarded?"

The Baron shook his head and sighed.

"The times have not changed—only the serpent, that so lately held itself erect to sting, now crawls stealthily upon its victim—there is deceit everywhere in France, for the spirit of Fouché pervades its government and councils."

\* The Duc d'Orleans.

“And Chiffon?”

“Nay, my dear Victor, I do not accuse him—lacking proof, I should blush to do so—but I have a habit of assorting my papers, and, as with age we grow methodical, placing them according to their shape, bulk, subject, and so on; by degrees the idea has struck me, that frequent alterations were made in this arrangement—but not by me.”

“Is it possible!”

“The seals of the packets were ever as I left them, but the contents were often differently arranged: for instance, a document that was near the bottom I would find close at the top, and one that I had purposely placed near the top had, in the same unaccountable manner, sunk to the bottom.”

“Grounds for suspicion, indeed!”

“And yet, as I say, to all appearance the seals of the letters—the fastenings of the drawers—were untampered with. Now, my valet alone has access to the room, and therefore it is not surprising that my suspicion fell first upon him—”

“I would shoot the scoundrel, did I think—”

“Patience, patience, Victor, I may be mistaken—nay, possibly I am—what I ask of you is, that you will seek to learn more of the past history of Chiffon than this recommendation of De Nangis affords?”

“Certainly—my father—”

“Nay, do not speak of it to him—I could have done that: but you know his careless way, and more-

over he would possibly feel hurt at a doubt, upon such slender grounds, thrown upon the character of his *protégée*. Do you know any of the De Nangis?"

"The nephew of Chiffon's master was one of my companions at Coblentz."

"Inquire, then, of him : he may learn something concerning a man for so many years the valet to his uncle."

"I will write to-night!"

Again the Baron laughed good humouredly.

"Time enough, time enough, Victor ; I have business at Loudiac to-morrow, and shall not return until the day after ; we will then speak further of this. In the meanwhile I have taken precaution to prevent the repetition of the treachery—if treachery has been committed."

As the Baron said this, the curtain of the recess, which was partially drawn, was twitched aside, and a laughing voice exclaimed—

"Why, d'Aubigny, what conspiracy are you and Victor hatching here in the darkness? Come forth into the light, that we may read the mystery from your faces."

"There's no mystery, Chevalier ;" and the gentlemen quitted the recess and joined the company in the *salon*. I purpose a journey to Loudiac to-morrow, and was giving some instructions to Victor, to which he has kindly promised to attend in my absence."



"What instructions? I have the curiosity of a woman."

"And the tongue, I fear," said the Baron.

"Would I could boast one only half as bewitching as Mademoiselle's,"—and the Chevalier bowed to Eugenie,—“and I would know every secret in men's power to tell, even though some of them were locked up in the bosom of Fouché himself!”

"You would tell them again as quickly; so they would be secrets no longer."

"Is it a crime to disseminate knowledge?"

"Forbidden knowledge—to pluck the fruit of which entails a penalty," said Chateaufvieux, with a smile.

"I've had penalties enough in my time, Monsieur Marcel. I had scarcely begun to try my wings in the world, when I was compelled to sing my first song behind the bars of the Bastille; it was there I made my name as a poet."

"A poet!"

"Yes, my dear Mademoiselle Eugenie; I composed twenty-seven odes and some fifty sonnets."

"Might I ask the favour of a copy of poems that must, from such an author, be at least original?"

"I am sorry to refuse you, Mademoiselle; but the only copy of the work is no longer extant—it fell with the walls of the Bastille."

"How so?"

"The *sans-culottes* had no feeling for poetry; and,

as mine was traced with a nail upon the walls of my dungeon, they destroyed it without compunction—it was a pity. I had just commenced an epic when I was liberated.”

“And France lost a second *Henriade*?” said the Baron.

“Such is the fate of genius. Every memento of my work is lost, but the nail, which I have carefully preserved as a confirmation of my story.”

“They soon imprisoned the bird again: was it not so, *de Preville*?”

“*Parbleu!* they looked upon me as a flower that the rough winds of heaven would destroy, so kept me carefully preserved between four stone walls—L’*Abbaye*, the *Conciergerie*, St. Lazare. I’ve been an inmate of them all, and came out scatheless, as you see.”

“A sad life,” said *Eugenie*.

“Not at all,” replied the Chevalier. “We had neighbour Death so long, that we ceased to fear it. I never met such good company before as I met in those various prisons. It was in my last place of detention that I made the acquaintance of poor *Chénier*; who, like myself, *Mademoiselle*, fostered the flowers of poesie in a dungeon—though, when I took up my nail, I had no such inspiration as the beautiful *Mademoiselle de Coigny*. Poor *André*! he made a temple of his prison, and she was then the deity he placed upon the shrine.”\*

\* *André Chénier*. Of this poet, who only wanted time to be

“The Chevalier was unfortunate!” said Chateauvieux, with a barely concealed sneer. “He seems to have suffered under each government.”

“Getting an iron bracelet, when men like Monsieur Etienne Marcel would have transmuted the metal and made it gold!”

“How! Monsieur;” and the dark brows of Chateauvieux met in a frown.

The Chevalier threw a glance towards him—a bright shaft of contemptuous ridicule—and laughed—  
“You are a trader; and it is one of the rules of trade to sell its goods in the best market—and buy in the cheapest. Faith! it’s an example worth following.”

“You council treason, de Preville!” said d’Aubigny, “and treason never prospered yet.”

“No! my dear d’Aubigny; treason is but the battle of the outs against the ins: he that is fortunate will ever pass for the right. I remember an epigram worth much for the truth it teaches, though it comes from England:—

“Treason doth never prosper, what’s the reason?  
For if it prosper, none dare call it treason!”

“Where did you learn this folly?” said the Baron, half angry—half laughing.

great, Lamartine says:—“The dreams of his splendid imagination had found their reality in Mademoiselle de Coigny, who was incarcerated in the same prison.” Thus does love triumph in the face of death.

“ Folly ! it’s the essence of wisdom. I have sown my wild oats, and am waiting the harvest of virtuous reward to spring from their burial. You are a rich man, d’Aubigny, and I a very poor one : could I have found a red cap to fit my head, or have tuned my throat to the *Marseillaise*, I might have still called many broad acres mine. I was loyal, in Paris, and a conspirator, and I am now paying the penalty in a fifth and last prison—the gloomy little chateau Pontarlac.”

“ We must not remember our troubles, Chevalier,” said Eugenie. De Preville bowed ; and his voice, whose tones had been unusually bitter, changed in a moment.

“ It is only Mademoiselle who has the power to make us forget them.”

“ And the means ?”

“ Music ! whether she speaks or sings.”

“ You will sing, Eugenie,” and the fond father looked at his tall and graceful daughter with a proud smile.

“ With pleasure—if my doing so will give pleasure to these gentlemen.”

The gentlemen were profuse in their expressions of delight. Eugenie’s voice answered them ; but her eyes—those brown, tender eyes—with such a depth of love beneath their velvet surface, sought Victor’s—such a glance is the silent medium by which soul communicates with soul—speaking a language the most poetic in the word, and one which only lovers understand.

"A song of Brittany," suggested Victor. "One of the ballads of the people—whose simple words are the utterance of the heart—in whose melody we hear the sad murmur of the wind across our heaths, the melancholy ripple of the waves upon our shores."

"You're very romantic, Victor," said his father. "I don't object to it—it's as becoming in youth, as a blush on a maiden's cheek—but it's as out of place in age as paint in the cheek of the—"

"Hush!"

Eugenie had begun to sing an old Breton song, whose plaintive melody brought tears into the eyes of the listeners, with the exception, perhaps, of de Preville, who considered sentiment to be a mistake. The song was in the native Celtic, and was a fair sample of that "dying language and dying poetry," which is so rapidly passing away,—it was the patriotic lay of some bygone and nameless poet—

"Whose songs gushed from his heart,  
As showers from the clouds of summer—  
As tears from the eyelids start."

The Baron—who, all aristocratic as he was Breton to the core of his heart—was visibly affected: and, when the song concluded, bent over his daughter's chair and pressed a loving kiss upon her forehead. Even the Chevalier had, for a moment, lost his nonchalance, and complimented the singer with his sunniest smile, saying—"Had the Syrens sung with voices only half

as sweet, alas! for Ulysses and his crew, for they would have been most certainly devoured."

"A stream of delicious melody," said Chateuvieux; "of which the very sands are golden!" added the Chevalier.

"Really, gentlemen, you overpower me with your compliments," laughed Eugenie. "You are so lavish in your gifts, that, like Tarpeia, I am crushed beneath them."

"Eugenie has a stock of these old ballads: her nurse was famous for her skill in singing them—both the ballads of the mountains, and the exquisite *complaints* of the coast."

"I have heard much of the latter," said the Abbé, "and if our solicitations may have effect upon Mademoiselle—"

"Eugenie is always delighted to pleasure her father's guests—in this, as, I believe, in all things, I can answer for my daughter."

The beautiful head was bent for a moment, and the face hidden: then it was raised, and with eyes, whose lustre shone through tears, Eugenie d'Aubigny sung one of the wild yet musical *complaints* to which we have before referred.

\* \* \* \*

Beneath the windows of the *salon*, standing immoveable under the dark shadow of the trees, stood a man—his face was concealed by the broad brim of his hat. As he leant forward, listening attentively to

the singing within, his arms were crossed over the muzzle of a gun, the butt of which rested on the ground. He remained thus immoveable, like a sentinel at his post, long after the second song was finished, only altering his position by leaning his back against a tree ; then, one by one, the lights disappeared from the windows, indicating that the inhabitants of the maison d'Aubigny were about to seek their rest. The man for the first time made a gesture of impatience, by striking the butt of his gun violently upon the ground.

“ He will not return to Pontarlac. *Diable!* then I have had my watch for nothing ; nothing ! that can scarcely be for I have heard the singing of Mademoiselle, and singing, too, the songs of our Brittany.”

He waited a few minutes more—scanned each window of the house with an eye that flashed like a hawk’s from beneath his hat—then, carrying his gun in the hollow of his arm, turned and disappeared among the trees. He had scarcely done so, when the gate of the chateau was opened, and a horseman, muffled closely in his cloak, for the night was cold, rode out of the court-yard ; returning the “ God be with you ! ” of the old servant who closed the gate behind him, he gave his horse the spur, and galloped swiftly down the road. He had not proceeded far, however, before he reined-in his horse, and, bending forward, listened attentively : for from the thick undergrowth about the trees that lined the roadside, there came a peculiar cry—that of the screech-owl—which was three times re-

peated. The horseman, at the third cry, uttered a similar sound, which was answered by a loud laugh, and the man with the gun jumped nimbly into the road.

"I thought it was you, Monsieur Victor. So you have not forgotten the old *Chouan* war-cry : it has often enough struck terror into the cowardly hearts of the *Blues*, being always followed by a volley from our guns. I remember, though I was but young at the time, the struggle that took place in this very road."

The man had advanced nearly to the horseman's bridle, who said with some surprise—

"Keroulas!"

"You were slow to recognise me," said the Breton, laughing. "We Bretons have eyes like cats, and see the better for the darkness. I knew you directly you came through the gate." Then, he added, "I have been waiting out here for some hours, hoping to get speech with Monsieur le Chevalier."

"With my father!" again Victor showed surprise. "He sleeps at the Baron's to-night, and will not return to Pontarlac till the morning; but is your business so pressing that it will not keep till the morning?"

"It is pressing, for it concerns the Baron d'Aubigny and his daughter!"

"What do you mean, Keroulas? Speak, man! nothing can concern them that does not also concern



me"—he checked himself—"and everyone who loves them."

"You are right, Monsieur Victor : what is intended for the ear of the father cannot go far wrong when entrusted to the son. This, then, is what I had to relate to the Chevalier."

The Breton, resting upon the barrel of his gun, went on—

"You know Martin?"

"For the most superstitious fool this side of the Loire—and that's saying much ; go on !"

"Humph ! that's as it may be. But Martin was returning late last night from Saint Croix ; and, wishing to avoid as much as possible the loneliness of the heath, took the road that sweeps round here under the trees, facing the maison d'Aubigny."

"Well, well?"

But the Breton, like all of his race, was not to be hurried. He went on, deliberately, "Martin had crossed the main road, and was keeping as much as possible under the shadow of the trees, when a turn in the path brought him directly under the windows of the left wing ; he paused a moment to glance up at them, when to his alarm the largest window was gently opened, and a man descended by the limbs of the great vine which forms a natural ladder at that side of the house."

"And Martin?"

“Fled—without looking behind him. He was silent about what he had seen all day ; but as the evening drew on, and we sat together, could keep his council no longer, and so unburthened his mind to me.”

“Silent!—for why ? Why not have gone instantly to the Baron ?”

“Martin is discreet enough in some things. The man was coming from the house—a hand closed the window behind him. Scandal has made much of less—and—the Baron has a daughter—”

“Dog ! would you dare to suspect—”

The Breton started erect as an arrow, and by an instinctive movement raised his gun,—and then let it fall again slowly to his feet. “I pardon your words. You love Mademoiselle, and he who loves is neither master of his words nor his actions ; but I still say Martin was discreet—and knew little of the arrangement of the rooms in the house—the man descended from the third over the vine-trellis.”

“The Baron’s study !”

“As you say, the Baron’s study. Knowing that, I was here to speak to your father, who is the Baron’s friend, and lacks not patience to hear a plain story.”

Victor extended his hand to the Breton.

“Pardon me, Keroulas, I—” Keroulas seized the proffered hand, shaking it warmly.

“It is I who was in the wrong. There are some

names so dear that we tremble when another mentions them. You will tell the Chevalier of this discovery of Martin's?"

Victor reflected for a few minutes, then answered—

"No! it is best, at present, we speak of this to no one. It shall be my care to watch; it will be time when we know more—and more we shall know—to act."

"I will share your watch, Monsieur Victor. Had I been in Martin's place, a shot from my gun should have brought the robber to the earth."

"How know you that he was a robber?"

"None but a robber leaves an honest man's house by the window!"

"The mystery thickens!" thought Victor, "and the Baron's suspicions are more than correct: though whether Chiffon be in league with this spy—for such he is evidently—is yet doubtful." He turned towards the ex-Chouan, who, whistling softly, was polishing his gun-barrel with his sleeve.

"Do you return to Père Bonchamp's farm?"

"No! I sleep to-night at Jalec's cabin. By sunrise we have to be fishing a league off the coast."

"I will ride with you. Jalec can give me sleeping room, I know—a chair and my cloak is all that I require. Come, Keroulas, we can talk as we go." As he said this he pushed on somewhat briskly; then, suddenly tightening his rein, said, "I travel too

quickly—I had forgotten that I have four feet beneath me, and you but two.”

But the hardy Breton, who was still whistling softly, motioned to him to proceed. “Never fear for me, Monsieur Victor; a man’s walk can equal a horse’s over such ground as this;” and he strode on, keeping pace with the horse without any apparent effort, still diligently polishing the barrel of his gun.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE RIVALS—HANDS NOT HEARTS—M. ANATOLE  
CHIFFON.

It was long past noon, and all was busy life on Dominique Bonchamp's farm. [A number of Breton damsels, in their modest and picturesque costume, were bustling about, attending to the wants of the labourers as they came and went in and out of the farm ; the voice of the farmer was heard everywhere, and his portly person was so active in its movements, that at times he appeared ubiquitous. The farm was evidently one of the most prosperous, and presented none of that dirt and discomfort unfortunately so frequent in the homesteads of Brittany.

Standing at the door of the dairy was Yvonne, leaning against the primitive-looking woodwork : she looked as beautiful and delicate as one of those exquisite flowers that we see at times adorning the rough sides of an oak. Near her stood Paul Lebrun, with a look of mingled bashfulness and impudence upon his generally bold face ; but, in the presence or

Yvonne, his reckless bearing was subdued,—not by any effort on her part,—but as a rough spirit is awed and calmed by the quiet and holy aspect of the interior of some Christian church. Yvonne's pure and gentle face was the altar before which the wild nature of the young sailor bent down ; true, he struggled against the feeling, but to conquer it—was impossible. It was during one of these struggles to regain his usual confidence of demeanour that we come upon him now.

“ A good morning's work this !” and he kicked carelessly at a huge basket of fish that stood at his feet. “ Had Keroulas been compelled from his cradle to pick up a living with the hook and line, he could scarcely have done better.”

“ Keroulas is a good fisherman. Jalec says a better sailor—”

“ Sailor !” laughed Lebrun contemptuously. “ You don't call these spratcatchers sailors ! why, there's not not one of them but would faint downright did he once see the line of his dear native shore fade in the horizon.”

“ That is not true, Lebrun. Our Brittany has produced too many good sailors,” she smiled good humouredly at Paul, “ yourself among the number, to permit belief in your sarcasm : besides, is he less a man because his heart sinks when for the first time he leaves his native land behind him ?”

“ Oh ! certainly not. I have had my eyes over-

flow myself: and the first time we steered out of Brest I cried like a great lubberly boy—which, in fact, I was.”

“And you are none the worse for it, as a man, I suppose?”

“I suppose not: yet, to be valued ashore it is not sufficient to have gained the reputation of a good sailor! an ‘idle ne’er-do-well,’ they say, and they pass him by for some St. Peter,” and again he kicked the basket with his foot, “who brings home his miraculous draught of fishes!”

“For shame, Paul Lebrun! to speak thus ill-naturedly of those who daily risk their lives to give their wives and children bread. Besides, you have an irreverent way of speaking of holy things, which I greatly dislike.”

“I was brought up to the sea, and not to the church!” answered Paul, somewhat sulkily.

“And so to follow creditably the one, you consider it necessary to entirely forget the precepts of the other! I’m really ashamed of you, Paul!”

The young sailor looked up into the bright face of the pretty lecturer, and said somewhat sheepishly—

“I’m but a rough fellow, I know; but, under your tuition, I shall soon be tame enough—such a tongue would quell a tiger!”

Yvonne laughed outright at this very doubtful compliment.

“So I’m a shrew, am I?”

“ You !!!—why you’re as gentle as the dove that announced the abatement of the storm to Captain Noah ; and your words are as soothing as oil upon the waves. *You* a shrew !—good idea that !”

“ Yvonne !” called farmer Bonchamp, looking suddenly out from the loft of an adjacent barn, “ we can have no idle hands here ; you must make Paul useful, if he will persist in coming here in the day-time : the day for work, the evening for play, and the night for rest. “Hilloh ! Jean, you blockhead, are you going to market with a cart loaded in that fashion ?” and the farmer disappeared from the window of the loft to reappear immediately afterwards in a distant corner of the yard.

“ You hear what my father says,—if you would do nothing but bask in the sun, you had better go out on the heath. You won’t plough, and you don’t fish ; what, then, are you good for ?”

“ Keroulas does both !”

“ He does : my father says he drives the straightest furrow of them all ; and as for his fishing, look there !” and she pointed to the basket.

“ I wish he’d dropped over the side of Jalec’s boat, and they were now fishing for him with his own hook and line !” This time Master Paul kicked the detested basket so viciously that it turned over, and its contents were scattered about. Before Yvonne could speak, a hand was laid on Paul’s shoulder, and he was thrust roughly back.



“If a man won’t labour himself, he should not mar the labour of others.”

Lebrun turned fiercely round, and faced Keroulas?

“If you place your hand on me, I’ll pitch you over one of your own hayricks! I’ve driven many a furrow over a field,” and he pointed towards the sea, “that you were never man enough to plough!”

“Not man enough!—what is there Keroulas Carnac is not man enough to do?—and yet Paul Lebrun dares to attempt—”

Without answering, the two young men, both brave as lions and as strong, glared for a moment at each other.

Yvonne read their angry purpose in their eyes, and was hastening to advance between them, when a chuckling laugh was heard behind them, and a voice sounded unpleasantly in their ears—

“Ha! ha! the rivals! take care, my friends, take care! I’ve heard that when the dogs were busy fighting, the fox ran off with the bone!” Both the young men turned towards the new comer—no other than the Baron’s “confidential” valet, Monsieur Anatole Chiffon, who stepped briskly between them. Keroulas, who hated the valet from his soul, was the first to speak—

“You may also have heard that there is danger in interposing in another’s quarrel!”

“And that he who comes between two enemies

gets kicked and pummelled for his pains!" added Lebrun.

"Fie! fie!! what words are these?" said the unmoved valet. "It flavours rather of the Gascon than the Breton to hector thus before a lady!"

Both the young men stole a glance at the pained and anxious face of Yvonne, and were silent. Ah! the power of beauty! Had either of these bold fellows been a Hercules, they would have required no other Omphale but Yvonne, but would have been content to have taken the distaff and spun at her feet for the remainder of their lives.

"For shame, Keroulas! for shame, Paul," she said, glancing from one to the other in a pretty anger. "It is fortunate my father is not a witness to this scene! Have you so little respect for me, Keroulas, that you must act thus? And you, Paul Lebrun, if you come only to disturb this quiet home with such silly brawls, had best come here no longer."

"Ha! ha! my friend!" whispered Chiffon in the angry sailor's ear, "your case is hopeless. You see which way the cat jumps."

Lebrun, without answering Chiffon, turned towards Yvonne, and said, humbly enough—

"My visits should long ago have ceased, did I deem them to have been unpleasant to Père Dominique and his daughter: as for others," and he darted a look of defiance at his rival, "there are

places of meeting to be found where interference is impossible!"

"If Paul Lebrun will name the place, Keroulas Carnac will be there to await his coming."

Yvonne was becoming really frightened. Her gentle nature took alarm at the revengeful and meaning looks the two young men cast at each other.

"I would be the last to forbid Paul Lebrun my father's house. One who has proved himself so brave against our enemies, can scarcely fail to be welcome to his friends."

"You see, you see," snarled Chiffon, this time in the ear of Keroulas, "these rovers of the deep win the women after all!—there's a romance in the life that can never be obtained by those who plod on a beaten path ashore."

The face of Keroulas grew dark as night—his black eyes seemed filled with a smouldering fire: his teeth were clenched; his lips compressed; a demon possessed him—the demon of jealousy! The dogged, revengeful spirit of the Breton was roused: he said nothing, but his resolve was firm as iron.

Poor Yvonne never dreaming of the fearful storm she had raised, laid her hand upon that of Paul Lebrun, upon whose brown surface it showed like a snow-flake.

"Give me your hand?" he did so, though reluctantly, as knowing what would follow. "It's an

honest one I know. And now, Keroulas, yours!" The Breton looked doggedly down, and remained motionless. Lebrun coloured crimson from the throat to the temples, and would have withdrawn his hand, but that Yvonne still held it in hers, and he would not have lost that soft touch for a pocketful of gold pieces.

"Another time, Mademoiselle Yvonne," he said. "Keroulas Carnac and I have had many disputes of late; this would be but a hasty settlement, after all."

"He who shall win the cause of dispute is, I fear, pretty nearly decided!" whispered the valet, as he twitched at the sleeve of the peasant.

"Keroulas!" said Yvonne again, and once more Chiffon gave a warning pull at his sleeve. Poor Keroulas Carnac! his good and bad angels were beside him: this time, however, the good angel triumphed.

"Keroulas!" a moment of hesitation—then the Breton peasant stepped forward, and Yvonne taking his hand, placed it in that of Lebrun."

"You are friends!" she said.

They said so,—that is, their tongues said so—their hearts spoke a different language. Chiffon read it in their eyes. Yvonne—as how could she be?—was not so keen an observer.

"Quite pathetic, this;" sneered Chiffon. "Blood soon hot, soon cool, eh? It's for all the world like a scene from one of Joseph Chenier's tragedies—it's a glorious truce, if it be but lasting."

“ Away, bird of evil omen !” said the sailor, only too pleased to have an object upon which he could freely vent his passion. “ You are a Jonah that would sink the best ship that ever floated ! Had I a chap of your kidney aboard one of mine, overboard you’d go, though I gave some dozen fishes an indigestion.”

“ Walk the plank, eh ! been a little in the piratical way ? I shouldn’t wonder : it requires caution, though—it’s not so safe as wrecking !”

“ If you stand there grinning at me, you varlet, I’ll —” and the sailor raised his arm.

“ Stop !” thundered Keroulas ; and equally anxious with Lebrun to find fresh cause for quarrel, he was once more about to advance upon Lebrun, when Père Dominique suddenly appeared. The change was electrical : at the first glimpse of his sturdy figure, and round, healthy face, the dark clouds cleared away at once—the brows were unbent—the hands were unclenched,—and to all, but those who had witnessed the previous scene, everything appeared to be on the most amicable footing ; or rather, we should say, to all but one of those who had witnessed the previous scene, for Yvonne was delighted with what she considered her success as a peacemaker ; while Chiffon, evidently greatly delighted, shrugged and chuckled—“ Only a little dispute upon the matter of ploughing—one preferring the furrow drawn in the water, the other that carved in the land !”

“ Pooh ! pooh !” said the good farmer, “ both are

good ploughmen in their way, and both to be honoured alike. But, my children, let us have no more quarrelling,—do you hear? Shake hands!”

They did hear, and mechanically obeyed his commands; for Dominique Bonchamp was a despot, though a kindly one, upon his little domain. His were judgments without appeal: he wielded his power with moderation, because he knew it was secure, and was looked up to as a father by his numerous dependants.

“Come, Yvonne, my flower, let us have a jug of cider. I’ve been bawling after those scamps in the yard till my throat is as dry as a miller’s; besides, I must drink a glass with Paul, in honour of the brave deed he did the other day. Only think,” and he turned to Chiffon, “this thoughtless ne’er-do-well must needs go risking his life, to save that of—ha! ha! what do you think?—an Englishman! \* stupid fellow!”

“Truly, an unchristian-like act!” said Chiffon.

“Humph!” the honest farmer coloured slightly, and said with some confusion, “I did not say that. I have no love for the English, and look upon them as the natural enemies of my country; but, had I been in Paul’s place, I should have done the same,—and I honour him for it!”

\* “Those who have never heard the tone in which the name of *Sagyoit* (Saxon) is pronounced on the shores of Brittany, cannot conceive the hatred it awakens in the hearts of this people. An Englishman, in their estimation, is not a foreigner—he is not even an enemy—he is an Englishman.—*Souvestre*.

“And so we all do,” said Yvonne, extending her little hand, which the delighted and bewildered sailor seized upon eagerly, and, by an unconquerable impulse, conveyed to his lips. The farmer only laughed ; but Yvonne withdrew her hand hastily. She had, as she truly said to Mademoiselle d’Aubigny, a friendship for Lebrun, but her love was for the companion of her childhood—Keroulas Carnac.

The Breton peasant, by an effort, mastered his passion, though he was trembling in every limb. He turned from the large blue eyes of Yvonne—those “homes of silent prayer”—which had sought his face ; and then his gaze rested on the triumphant and sarcastic visage of the valet.

Things must be bad indeed, to bestow such an evident pleasure upon Anatole Chiffon.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE—VICTOR'S MIDNIGHT VIGIL—THE  
HOODED SNAKE !

AGAIN we visit the maison d'Aubigny.

In a small room, elegantly furnished, and tastefully decorated with pictures and flowers, two lovers are seated—lovers, for the glow of youth is on their cheeks—its freshness about their hearts ! Lovers !—and yet they have been husband and wife for several years. Eugenie de Preville—for the reader has now been taken into our confidence—rests her hand upon the arm of her husband and looks entreatingly into his face.

“ Victor, our secret must be told ! ”

“ And your father ? ”

“ Will know all. Believe me, dear Victor, it were better than this continued deceit, which lowers us and dishonours him.”

“ Dishonours him ! Eugenie ! ”



"Surely, yes. It was but yesterday, as I understand, that he sent a letter to Count de Marigny, to be delivered by the Abbé Chateaufvieux upon his return to England."

"Which letter the Abbé will not deliver ; for none can know as well as he its futility."

Eugenie sighed.

"Yet more deceit—and my poor father, who is building upon the advantages likely to accrue from such an alliance, when things once more right themselves in France—"

Victor looked lovingly into his wife's face, and said—

"Do you repent, Eugenie ?—do you repent the act that has united our fates for ever? True, you have lost a dazzling future in wedding so poor a gentleman, who, unless he carves out fortune with his sword, has nothing but a small, impoverished estate to—"

He was not permitted to proceed further ; for the white arm of Eugenie was about his neck, and one of her small hands upon his mouth.

"Oh ! shame, Victor ! to wrong me thus. When I gave my hand, my heart went with it—it was a gift freely bestowed. Has time lessened its value?"

The brown eyes had filled with tears, but Victor kissed away the diamond drops ere they fell.

"It has but enhanced it !" he said. "You are to me, Eugenie, the only joy of my life. Accident threw us together at Coblenz. To see you was to love you ;

and I loved you fervently—not as the rich Baron d'Aubigny's daughter, but as the exiled girl, alone in a world of danger—whose mother had already fallen beneath the glaive of the assassins, and whose father, a captive in one of their prisons, was believed to be beyond even the hope of release, except through the same dread portal. The Abbé Chateaufvieux, an old companion of your father, was also my friend as he was yours, Eugenie. He also saw the dangers that surrounded you, and willingly consented to join our hands. He did so, and you became my wife—my loved and loving wife.”

“Yes, my husband! and I regret nothing but that fatal resolve to keep our marriage secret from my father.”

“It was a necessary one: the Abbé himself advised it. Your father's honour was pledged to de Marigny. Time, it was possible, would bring its changes. The Baron had never visited Coblenz. Your aunt—my poor godmother—the witness to our union, was dead. The Abbé pointed out the policy of this temporary concealment. My father held out hopes—nay, still holds out hopes of a speedy change in our fortunes—a change, he often says, that will enable us to leave this dreary little chateau of Pontarlac, for the brilliant, active world of Paris.”

“You would leave Pontarlac?”

“With you, Eugenie, I would leave it to-morrow, were I able. I long to shake off the rust of this ignoble idleness—to take my chance in the great strife,

and gain for myself the laurel crown—or, failing in the attempt,—” he hesitated for a moment—then said firmly, but sadly—“ a grave !”

Eugenie started—then looked reproachfully at her husband, whose arm encircled her waist, but whose head was turned away.

“ You are selfish, Victor ! Even of your grave, I, a true wife, would claim my share !”

“ Eugenie !”

“ You married me when I was poor and friendless—when the revolutionary wave had submerged France, and not a rood of land belonged to its nobles. You swore to love me then. Ah ! Victor, you no longer love me, for you would leave me now !”

“ I would win a name before claiming you at your father’s hands. I would find favour with him before—”

“ You have done so ! You are the Chevalier de Preville’s son, and my father loves you as his own !”

There was a pause—one of those delicious pauses, when two hearts seem to have but one beat—when two souls but one sympathy—two brains but one thought. Victor was the first to speak.

“ You are right, Eugenie. In this I will be guided by you.”

She pressed his hand in both of hers, and looked up gratefully.

“ This deceit shall end. To-morrow, when the Baron returns, he shall know all.”

“ From me, Victor ? Yes—let the task be mine.

He will be quick to pardon when he hears the long-deferred confession from the lips of his child."

"Deferred!—yes—too long deferred: had it not been for my father's promises—of this golden shower that has yet to descend, I should have told the Baron of our early love—our hurried, and, as we then thought, necessary union."

"To-morrow I will also," continued Victor, "make confession to my father, though from him I have nought to fear. 'Are you happy?' he will say. 'I am!' then he will shrug his shoulders and say, 'I am satisfied'—declining the exertion of either praise or blame."

"The Chevalier is a happy man—he seems without a care."

"You mistake, dearest. I do believe his heart is full of care for me. He is a sybarité—but not one of that effeminate breed whose whole system is deranged by a crumpled rose-leaf! I have ever found him a kind and indulgent father."

"I love him for that. I, too, have sought his love, and believe that I have gained it. Speak to him first, then, dear Victor, and he shall be our mediator with the Baron. I know my father, and how his heart will melt into tenderness beneath the persuasive voice of his friend."

"Hark!"—a small clock on the chimneypiece struck the hour—"it is ten o'clock, and I must go, dear Eugenie!"

“Go!”

“I have a duty to execute to-night—a self-imposed one!”

“At this late hour?”

“Nonsense! darling; it is one without danger, but by the faithful performance of which much evil may be frustrated—much wickedness punished!”

“You alarm me!”

“There is no cause for alarm, little trembler. To-morrow I will tell you all;” he laughed, and placed his finger on his lips. “I shall guard my secret even from you for this night!”

“Where is your horse?”

“Tied, as usual, in the shrubbery—some fifty paces from the road.” Victor went to the window—“The moon will not be out to-night—I shall have a dark ride to Pontarlac.”

“Your home.”

“Not till its mistress enters it. Till then”—he pressed her again and again to his breast—“my home is here.” He crossed the room, and taking up a large cloak, which upon his entrance he had placed carefully near the door, arranged it about his person. “To-morrow will see a crisis in our fate. Victor de Preville will then claim his beautiful young wife, and they will meet to part no more!” He moved towards the door—paused, and made a gesture to Eugenie, who had taken the little lamp from the table—“Nay, dearest, no light—’twere better not. I can descend

the staircase safely, and I know the road too well to miss it now. To-morrow! my Eugenie. Till then—farewell.” He opened a door that led upon a long narrow staircase, from which descended a steep flight of stairs communicating with another door opening upon Eugenie’s little flower-garden—and, kissing his hand, was about to pass out, when his wife laughingly caught up something from the table and hurried after him—catching him by the cloak as she did so.

“ You are strangely forgetful to-night, Victor! Here is the key, without which your exit would be—” she stopped suddenly,—then again passed her hand down his cloak—“ What is this?—a sword! Why are you armed? Speak, Victor—it is your wife that asks!”

Victor drew her again to his bosom, and lovingly kissed her high and fair forehead.

“ Trembling again!—nay, then it is my turn to become alarmed, and ask what ails my wife? You must be careful of your health, Eugenie, for—”

“ But this sword?”

Victor laughed.

“ Is it the first time you have seen one? This”—and for a moment he pulled aside the cloak that had hidden it—“ is a sword of my father’s—a good one, I believe. He left it with Raymond, the cutler, at Point Croix. I stopped at his shop on my way from the shore. Are you satisfied?”

“ Heaven bless you, Victor!—but at times I have a

foreboding of evil, and — and — even trifles alarm me.”

Her husband had begun to descend the stairs.

“Go back to your nest, little bird—to-morrow will begin for us a new life. Till then, my wife, adieu.”

“Victor, my husband, adieu.”

She watched him descend the stairs, cross the little lobby, and open the outer door. He turned towards her and waved his hand. One long, loving look—the door closed, and Eugenie de Preville was alone. She stood for some minutes leaning against the balustrade, listening to catch, if possible, the faintest sound of his retreating footsteps; then slowly retraced the way back to her room, which, having reached, she sank upon her knees, and, with her face buried in her hands prayed—fervently prayed—for the happiness and welfare of her husband and father.

Blessings on thee! pure-souled, bright-haired Eugenie! That man may indeed account himself happy who is included in such prayers as those that rise to heaven from thy innocent and truthful lips!

Proceeding to that part of the shrubbery where he had left his horse, Victor de Preville, after having assured himself of the animal's safety, turned to the right, and forced his way again through the thick bushes until he arrived at the same spot where Keroulas held watch on the preceding night—there, leaning against the trunk of a tree, and thoroughly concealed by its shadow, he drew the folds of his cloak

closer around him, and commenced his solitary vigil.

An hour passed, and yet he waited patiently. No sound had met his ears, but the hoot of that feathered hermit the owl—rejoicing in the darkness, or the flap of the bat's leathern wings, as it brushed past him. This, and the fierce screaming of the wind, as it tore through the roof of branches that spread above his head, was all that disturbed the silence around. Another hour passed—and still the young man watched—his gaze never quitting the window of the Baron's study, which remained dark and sombre—never opening an eye upon the wild night that was holding its reign without.

A sound! yes, at last a sound, as of a horse's hoofs, fell upon his strained ear, and then was swept away by the wind that was tearing and shaking the branches. Again and again the sound came!—and Victor, with head bent forward, listened. Yes—it was the sound of a horse's hoofs, striking with a dull and heavy sound upon the close-cut turf. At every lull in the fierce blast it became more audible, approaching nearer and nearer to where the young man stood. Suddenly it stopped—the sounds ceased, and the bat and the owl—those children of the night—alone disturbed its silence.

“Whoever he may be, he has halted!” thought Victor, as his eyes endeavoured to pierce, though in vain, the screen of underwood. “He has kept upon the grass, that his horse's tread should not be carried



down the road, which it would be, to a certainty, when the wind is in this quarter—*diable !*” He drew back hastily—as, within a few feet of him, a long, dark shadow fell upon the sward—then, with a quick step, a figure passed him, and approached the house. The man—for man undoubtedly it was—was wrapped from head to foot in a large horseman’s cloak, which effectually concealed his face and form from view. At the same moment a gleam of light shot from the study window—a lamp was passed several times across the panes—then all was dark as before. The stranger answered the signal by a low whistle, and crossing boldly the space between the shrubbery and the house, stood at the foot of the large vine mentioned by Keroulas—an ancient tree that clasped, with its huge serpentine-like limbs, the entire front of this wing of the house. Then the stranger lowered the cloak from his face, and turned a keen and searching look upon the shrubbery and garden around, without perceiving the anxious watcher, who still kept himself within the shadow of the trees—but Victor started, as he perceived that the stranger was masked.

“A spy—and masked !” The young man set his teeth hard, and grasped convulsively the hilt of his sword. “Shall I kill him now where he stands,—no—he shall die in the commission of his infamy ; besides, my task would be then but half completed. I would also know his accomplice. Ah !—as I expected—he is mounting by the branches of the vine !”

Placing his foot firmly upon the lower limb of the tree, the stranger began the ascent. It was evidently a ladder he had used before; for he passed from branch to branch without pausing an instant, till his head was upon a level with the window, the lattice of which was gently opened by some one from within; and then, swinging himself upwards, he was grasped by a pair of outstretched hands and drawn into the room. The lattice closed immediately, and all was as before.

For some minutes Victor de Preville remained motionless as a statue in his place of concealment.

"I would find them at their work," he thought, "and strike them in the midst of their fancied security. Security!—the fools—that security is indeed short-lived that attends on such a crime." After watching attentively the window—at which, however, there was no re-appearance of the light—he crept cautiously from the shadow, and crossed, as the stranger had previously done, the open space between it and the house. He did this as rapidly as possible, fearing a discovery that must inevitably have taken place had any been watching from the window; and, as he stood beneath the vine, his back closely pressed against the wall, the beat of his heart was distinctly audible. But there was no movement from within, the window still remaining closed; then, slowly, Victor began the ascent, having first wound his cloak in such a manner about him as not to impede his movements, and keeping the

hilt of his sword within grasp of his hand, ready for immediate use.

But one little lamp illuminés the Baron's study; and that so shaded that its light only falls upon the raised desk of the old bureau, upon which several papers are lying. Before the desk is seated the stranger—still closely masked—who is examining packet after packet with much eagerness—throwing the last one down with an exclamation of disappointment.

“It is not here! There are papers enough to excite suspicion, but none to prove a direct correspondence: that one would be worth them all.”

Leaning against the bureau—his arms folded, and with a look of more than usual cunning on his face—stands Monsieur Anatole Chiffon. He also shrugs his shoulders with an air of disappointment, and says, as he glances down at the papers with a grimace—

“That a document, more precise than any we have yet discovered, must be in existence, I know. I overheard the Abbé, before his departure, ask the Baron whether the paper was in a place of safety, saying, significantly—‘You know our heads are wrapped up in it!’”

Again the stranger turned over the papers, but evidently with the same want of success.

“The English brig brought the Abbé direct from England. I drew that from the sailor, who believed that I was sent from him to make inquiries; and Fouché has already informed you that a conspiracy is

hatching at Hartwell,\* though in Brittany it is to chip the shell."

"Do you know all the hiding-places in this mysterious old bureau?"

Chiffon drew himself up with conscious pride.

"All!"

"The Baron has possibly selected some other place for its concealment?"

"It is possible."

"Well?"

"Well—I shall find it."

"When?"

The valet shrugged his shoulders.

"Impatience will bring us no nearer to our end. That I shall find it, I am sure—the 'how?' remains to be considered."

"Well, I shall make notes of the contents of these packets. In the meanwhile do you take your stand at the further end of the corridor. Some of these brutes may take it in their heads to walk in their sleep, and we must run no risk."

"No risk is run."

"Humph!" The stranger's eyes gleamed through his mask, as he looked at Chiffon. "None by *you!* yours is but a dirty rag of a reputation, which half Paris—"

\* Hartwell, in Buckinghamshire, where Louis XVIII. fixed his residence, after the peace of Tilsit, and remained for some years.

"We are in Brittany, and not in Paris," said the valet, shortly.

The other laughed.

"Place the wax there. You have the seals—good—they are perfect. You might deceive Fouché himself!"

Monsieur Anatole Chiffon bowed modestly.

"I have no doubt you have done so."

The valet felt the flattery, and bowed again.

"Will your task be a long one?"—he pointed to the paper.

"Half-an-hour—and then I leave you to your peaceful slumbers. If a quiet conscience is a blessing, then you are blessed, Anatole. Go, and keep good watch."

He motioned towards the door, and Chiffon, without reply, moved softly across the room, opened it gently, and disappeared. The stranger looked after him, and muttered—

"That fellow glides over the floor without touching it, I think; though his appearance is scarcely so angelic as to lead me to believe that wings form a part of his personal adornment." He broke the seal of one of the packets as he spoke, and began diligently to peruse the contents—so diligently, as not to hear a slight noise behind him; and it was not till a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder, he became aware that the room had another occupant. With a low, but startled cry, he sprang to his feet, and, turning, stood face to face with Victor de Preville.

“Who are you?”—how came you here?” said the stranger, in a voice evidently disguised, after the two men had surveyed each other for a moment in silence.

“Who am I?—nay, I wear no mask. How came I here?”—he pointed to the window—“by the same road you so lately travelled.”

“Victor de Preville!”

“You know me, it seems. I know my presence to be undesired. You would, doubtless, have preferred meeting some other person?”

“Any other.”

A shudder passed through the frame of the stranger, and his voice sounded still more hollow beneath his mask.

“My presence in this study,” continued Victor, “is no intrusion. I am here by authority.”

“Whose?”

“It’s owner’s. Can you assert as much, and as truthfully?”

The stranger answered with a groan, and leant for support against the bureau. Victor regarded him steadfastly.

“You are my prisoner—escape is impossible!”

“Prisoner! Boy—do you take me for a robber?”

“Worse! I know you to be a spy—that basest of all created things—a political spy!”

“It is false!”

Victor pointed to the packet with the broken seal. The stranger made a hurried movement towards the

table ; but the young man unsheathed his sword and stepped between.

“ It shall be for the Baron to judge. Another such movement towards these papers, and I run my sword up to the hilt in your body—too honourable a death for such a man !”

The stranger seemed to reflect—his manner changed as he said—

“ Young man, I too am armed !”—and he drew the rapier that hung by his side. “ There lies my path !”—he pointed to the window—“ stay me, and the result be upon your own head !”

“ To leave this room, you must leave me—a corpse !”

Again the stranger seemed shaken by some uncontrollable emotion.

“ Madman !—insensate fool !—you know not what you do ! Let me pass !”

He would have advanced, but the point of Victor’s sword was at his breast—another step, and he would have been upon the quivering steel.

“ Listen—you are young, and I appeal to your heart. Let me pass, and on the word of a gentleman, I return to this room no more ! nor will I use the knowledge I have gained to—”

But he was interrupted by Victor’s contemptuous laugh.

“ Gentleman !—and do you lay claim to that sacred name ?—you—a spy—a robber !”

“Silence! Cross steel if you will, but do not stab with words—they may wound me—your sword cannot.”

Not another word was spoken—their swords crossed, and, with eyes bent on each other, they commenced the conflict. The clash of their weapons filled the room, but not a sound penetrated through the thick walls or beyond the massive door. The combat was soon over. Victor, to his surprise, found himself, though no mean adept with the sword, more than matched by the marvellous address and coolness of the stranger. Inch by inch he felt himself driven from the window he had so zealously barricaded, and forced backwards against the wall. Frantic with rage at this unlooked-for opposition, he resolved upon a desperate effort, and, watching his opportunity, made one rapid and dexterous lunge—a quick wrench of his wrist followed—a bright light flashed before his eyes, and his sword flew to the other end of the apartment.

He was at the mercy of his opponent; but the stranger seemed but little disposed for revenge. Leaning upon his long rapier, he said—still in the same hollow voice, which was so evidently assumed—

“That last thrust was well meant, but, fortunately for you, failed in its purpose. Victor de Preville, you are spared a great crime. You would have taken my life—yours is now at my disposal. I give it you, and farewell.”

He was moving towards the window, when again Victor flung himself in his way.



“Kill me, if you will ! but I have said it—you shall not leave this room and I alive. I scorn to accept life from a spy !—a traitor !—a midnight thief !”

The stranger paused irresolutely.

“The Baron’s secrets are in your hands—I will know who you are. Strike ! if you will—but the spy shall be unmasked !”

He prepared to spring upon the stranger, but with an imperious gesture he waved him back, saying, as he flung down his sword—

“Unhappy boy !—you will be satisfied !”

“I will !”

“You shall ! The act and its consequences be alike thine own.”

The voice had changed, and Victor threw up his hands with a gesture of alarm.

“No !—no !—I am mad—it cannot be !”

The mask was no longer upon the face of the stranger—he had wrenched asunder the strings, and it hung loosely down. With a wild cry Victor staggered back, and buried his face in his hands—

“MY FATHER !”

## CHAPTER IX.

FATHER AND SON—A CHANGE OF PLANS—DIAMOND  
CUT DIAMOND.

NIGHT—that “mother of dark-winged dreams”—had drawn down the last folds of her mantle from the face of the sleeping earth, and day hastened to awaken her with the loud matin hymn of rejoicing birds, the pleasant lowing of the cattle, and the plaintive bleatings of the sheep, as they leaped in myriads from their folds, and whitened the verdant plains and hills. The sun was high in the heavens before his beams poured through the narrow windows, cut, or rather rent, in the crumbling walls of the chateau Pontarlac, and gilded (it was sadly in want of adornment of some kind) its grey, slated roof. One of these stray beams had struggled through a window rather wider than its fellows, and rested upon the face of a gentleman which wore an expression quite as sunny as itself. Seated in an easy chair—whose covering and deep fringes had

once been magnificent, but which now was in the same state of woeful dilapidation as everything round—was the Chevalier de Preville, the owner of the chateau and all that it contained ; or, as he himself said, the Timon who had made this tumble-down old place a refuge from the world, where he might let a profitless life slip by, and “eat his root” in peace.

On the morning in question the Chevalier’s “root” consisted of a somewhat elegant *déjeûné*, to which he had done ample justice ; and when we—exercising an author’s right—break in upon his privacy, he has just lifted to a level with his eye a glass of fragrant Bordeaux, and was allowing the sunbeam to pour through its rich contents, which it did, at the same time encircling with its golden splendour not only the glass, but the delicate white hand that held it, and the small but costly ruffle of lace, that hung like a dew-spangled cobweb about the wrist.

Timon had breakfasted—and breakfasted well—and was, for an hour at least, at peace with the world.

After the Chevalier had sufficiently delighted his eye, he lowered the glass to a dangerous proximity with his mouth—when the door of the room was opened, and Victor de Preville entered the room.

Victor de Preville—but how changed from the previous night ! His eyes were wild and haggard—his cheeks had lost their healthy hue, and in its place had settled a paleness as of death. His dress was disordered and travel-stained, as from some long and

weary ride ; while his dark hair—generally so carefully arranged—hung about his face in ragged elf-locks.

His father stared at this apparition for a moment with astonishment—then placing his glass upon the table, he motioned towards a chair.

“ Be seated, Victor.”

But his son remained standing, and said—

“ You desired to see me. I have but just returned, or should before this have obeyed your summons.”

“ You are obedient !” said the Chevalier, with a pleased smile.

“ You are my father,” was the answer.

The Chevalier half rose in his easy chair, and said, with much tenderness—

“ I am proud of the title, Victor. You, it seems, are not so proud that I should claim it.”

Victor sighed.

“ But what ails you, my son. Why this torn and travel-stained apparel—you could have had but little rest ?”

“ Rest !—I have had none—can have none. I rode all last night.”

“ Where ?”

“ Nowhere—along the shore—across the heath. For miles and miles I chased forgetfulness—it was not to be overtaken by me !”

The Chevalier looked at his son for some minutes without speaking—then said gently—

“ Sit down, Victor—let us talk together.”

The young man obeyed mechanically, His father then went on—

“It is not my wish to remind you of benefits received ; but I have suffered much for you, Victor,—suffered—and suffered cheerfully, because you were my son—my only son.”

Victor’s head was bent upon his breast. He seemed like one sunk in a stupor—he neither moved nor returned an answer.

“Nay, this very—” the Chevalier hesitated—“line of policy you condemn so much, was thought of and adopted with a view to your future interests !”

“For mine !” For a moment the indignant spirit of the man flashed up ; but again his head sunk on his breast as he said, “For me, then, my father, you have plunged yourself into such hopeless dishonour !”

“Yes—for you, Victor. For myself, I might have been content to have finished my life in this tumble-down old chateau ; but it is necessary that you should have the means of advancement. To gain them I listened to the offers of Fouché, and consented to act as the government agent, and watch my plotting neighbours in Brittany.”

“The Baron was your friend !”

“Yes, we are what the world would call fast friends ; that is, the Baron condescends to admit to his intimacy the poor owner of Pontarlac, who, in his

turn has submitted—long enough, as it appears to me—to be thus patronised.”

Victor could no longer control his emotion—he sobbed aloud, and buried his face in his hands. A mingled look of commiseration and contempt settled upon the fine features of the Chevalier.

“This is useless, Victor—worse than useless—it is foolish! Keep your own counsel, and no one will be the wiser for the discovery you have made—a discovery I would have willingly spared you; but you were obstinate, and pulled down this trouble upon yourself.”

“But you, sir,”—and, raising his pale face, Victor looked fixedly at his father—“you will never use the knowledge you have gained to the injury of the Baron?”

“Humph!”

“You would not—dare not!”

“Dare not!—that’s as it may be; but you see, Victor, there are others engaged in this affair—paid agents of that police of which Fouché is the powerful head, as Anatole Chiffon is one of the least scrupulous hands.”

“Chiffon!—the Baron shall hang that scoundrel upon the nearest tree, as our farmers nail the treacherous kites to their barn-doors.”

“Tut! tut!—the Baron will do nothing of the kind. In the first place, he will remain in total

ignorance of the whole affair. In the second place, that any movement upon his part would be more likely to bring his own head to the axe than Chiffon's neck to the halter."

Victor would have interrupted, but his father motioned for silence, and continued—

"You consider the matter in a light by far too romantic for the age we live in. Oblige me by descending from the high horse you have mounted, and, leaving off heroics for a time, listen to reason. You must remember, my dear Victor, these are not the days of Corydon and Phillis, but those of Fouché and the secret police. Stay—before I commence you might like to strengthen your nerves—the Bordeaux is excellent. No!—well, perhaps you're right. You are hot-headed, and wine heats the blood sadly."

He emptied his glass—refilled it—then settled himself back in his chair. Evidently the Chevalier had begun to view things more composedly.

"D'Aubigny and I are rival politicians—that is all. He would become richer than he is by upsetting the existing order of things—I richer by maintaining it. Both of us look at France as a huge chess-table. We each move our men upon the board. Careful of *their* interests, inasmuch as being involved in our own, they assist our game. I checkmate the Baron and sweep the board—he loses his estates. I expressly stipulated for his personal safety, and I gain enough

to purchase my own back again—a desirable end, and one worth working for.”

“And the means by which you have endeavoured to attain it !”

“Means ! My dear boy, I must again entreat you to reflect calmly—if it is possible for youth so to do—upon the lessons that experience teaches. You are a Royalist. I do not find fault with your opinions, only I deem them ill-judged under the present aspect of affairs. Well, this system of espionage, which you—being young, and full of very generous, but utterly impracticable ideas—view with so much indignation, has been the one that has had the highest patronage from the Sicilian King,\* who turned his prison into one large ear, that he might the better arrive at the secrets of its inmates—down to the First Consul’s chief favourite, Joseph Fouché, who has carved all France into a similar shape, for precisely the same purpose.”

Without noticing Victor’s gesture of horror, the Chevalier continued—

“D’Aubigny and I were thrown together at the commencement of the revolution. We were both firm Royalists—that is, we stuck by our order ; and, having nothing to gain by a change, and everything

\* Dionysius I., who is said to have made a subterraneous cave in a rock—cut in the form of a human ear—for the purpose of hearing the discourse of his victims, who were confined in the prison above.



to lose, we anathematised the *canaille*, and sung, as loudly as any, ‘*O Richard! O mon roi, l’univers t’abandonne!*’ Unfortunately our prophecy was correct—the universe abandoned our Richard quickly enough, or, rather, he was compelled to abandon the universe. I saw the interior of nearly all the prisons of Paris, and a series of the dirtiest and most rascally gaolers that ever wore the red-cap for an ornament. My estates were confiscated, and your mother, with yourself, were saved by escaping over the frontier.”

“And the Baron d’Aubigny?” asked Victor.

“Saved his estates from the clutch of the Republican tiger by the good offices of his own house-steward, who—being a great rascal in every other respect—had become a pet of Robespierre.”

“The Baron was your friend. I have often heard him say—”

“How he lectured and advised me?—me, who—” the Chevalier was no longer calm—he had risen from the chair, and paced the room quickly as he spoke—“Listen, Victor! In my youth I had one vice—a great one, but it was shared by many. I had a passion for the gaming-table. I grant it was a Maelstrom that swept down much of the fortune that the rascals left me; but when times changed, and once more we were able to walk abroad with a tolerable certainty that our heads were our own for a day, at least, d’Aubigny found himself a rich man again, and I was

a beggar. He was my friend—you have said so, he has said so—and I appealed to him to assist me in paying a heavy debt of honour that I owed. I frankly owned how I had lost the money, and he—reverting to his former warnings and advice—refused. The sum was a large one. I tried elsewhere, but to raise it was impossible. My last money I had sent to you at Coblenz. Nay, never start, Victor! Your father never gave grudgingly—least of all, to you. The promised time of payment expired, and the man to whom I owed the money insulted me in the public promenade.”

“My father!”

The Chevalier laughed, but with much bitterness.

“You know that I have some little skill with the sword. A meeting followed—though he might have refused it till the debt was paid—and the next day they buried him at Montmartre.”

The Chevalier, who was standing by the table, filled his glass, and emptied it almost unconsciously.

“I have since paid the debt, with interest, to his wife and children—to do which I was forced to sell all that was left me but this beggar’s patch of Pontarlac. But I never forgot the high morality—the prudence of d’Aubigny.”

“You quarrelled?”

“Quarrelled!—no—is the boy a fool? We became firmer friends than ever. You have heard of that snake who hides its threatening eyes beneath a hood,

which it raises only when sure of its victim, and it throws back its head to strike?"

With a cry of anguish, Victor sprang to his feet.

"Father! father!—this scheme of revenge—this wicked, cruel scheme, you must forego—must—"

"Must!—Victor, do you know me?—are you mad?"

"It is you that are mad—blind—not to see—not to see—to know—" a sudden faintness came over him—he staggered and leant for support against the wall. With a bound the Chevalier was by his side—affection in his voice and eyes—alarm in the words that trembled from his tongue.

"Victor, my son! what would you have me know? tell me—this paleness is frightful—horrible! Speak! or I shall think that I have killed my son!"

Grasping his father's arm convulsively, Victor gazed into his face—a face that was now as pale and agitated as his own.

"The Baron's daughter—"

"Eugenie?"—and then the Chevalier's face crimsoned—and his son thanked Heaven; for he read in that rising blood the only sign of repentance he had seen—it was the glow of shame.

"Eugenie d'Aubigny is my wife!"

The Chevalier de Preville was a man of iron nerve. Beneath that winning and graceful exterior was concealed an energy of purpose, and a cool and calculating mind to guide it, that none but the keenest of

observers might discover. But for his all-absorbing love for this, his only son, he would have been a man after Talleyrand's own heart—if such an article formed an item in that distinguished statesman's anatomy,—skilled to varnish over his real meaning by smooth and deceptive words,—knowing well when to use those, with him, equally deadly weapons—the sneer and the smile. Slow to decide upon the means to be adopted to gain his ends ; but, when decided upon, unscrupulous in their use.

It must have been, indeed, a terrible resolve that had induced such a man—so fitted to make his way among the strife of factions now raging in all the continental courts—where “diplomacy” was the gift most prized—to bury himself, as he had done, in the dreary solitude of Pontarlac !

The end he had in view, he has himself explained. The edifice he had taken such pains to build was near its completion—and—five words from the lips of his son—and the edifice lay in ruins at his feet !

He answered not a word—but stood speechless—shaking in every limb, like one struck by a sudden palsy. Victor took him by the hand, and led him, unresisting as a child, to a chair.

“Father !” he said, “it is not yet too late to wipe from our escutcheon this terrible blot. This evil work must be undone. The information you have gleaned—how, let us for ever forget—must never pass your lips. The Baron we will warn—thank Heaven,

in time—of the precipice that lies before him. You will save him—save me ; for his fortunes are mine, as they are my wife's !”

The Chevalier only regarded him with a vacant and haggard stare.

“ This charge against the Baron can only be substantiated by you. Fouché never strikes but when the prey is certain. There is no one—”

The Chevalier spoke at last.

“ Fool !—there is one.”

“ One !—who ?”

De Preville shuddered as he answered ; for now he, too, saw the peril—the deadly peril—that environed them.

“ Fouché's master-spy—the keenest, cleverest of them all—Anatole Chiffon !”

A knock—then two more, sharply repeated—was heard outside the door. Both father and son started. The former rose immediately to his feet.

“ It is he ! There is an old proverb, that when we talk of the fiend he is sure to appear at our elbow—this scoundrel is here to prove the truth of it !”

Victor de Preville gazed upon his father with astonishment. Could this be the same man who, but a few moments before, he had seen speechless and powerless—shaking in every limb, as with some vague yet terrible dread ! The face was as calm and unruffled as the bright sky without, from which every vestige of cloud and storm-rack had long since disappeared. The lip

had possibly a tighter compression than usual; but that was all. He crossed the room, and opened a door opposite to that from which the sounds had proceeded, and said—

“He must not see you here. I have my reasons, but do not question me now. It is well he did not know of our meeting last night. Your retreat was not a moment too soon. This fellow has more than the cunning of the fox, and the nose of a sleuth-hound! Do you wait for me in the *salon*—I will descend when he is gone.”

“But this man—how to baffle him? He must be stayed at once, or—”

“Be that my care. Mine, I see, is a Penelope’s web, and I must myself undo the work I have so carefully fashioned. Go!”

Victor was passing out, when his father laid his hand upon his shoulder, and said, kindly—

“You, too, have erred. A confidence should have existed between father and son. Had there been no secret between us, how much evil would have been spared us both—nay, we will talk of this some other time. Listen!”

The knocking was repeated.

“There is scant time for explanations when the panther is scratching at the door. Go—all shall be as you wish. I have said it!”

He closed the door softly behind Victor—then, returning to his chair, resumed his seat.

"It's a strange world!" he said—"wheels within wheels. I lay the train and prepare the match—and lo! it is my own house I would blow into the air! Well, well—it is the task of genius to conquer difficulties; and this rascal, who is purring outside the door there, is my greatest."

Again came the three knocks—but this time louder.

"So ho!—impatient."

The Chevalier, without moving from his chair, pulled a silken cord that hung near it, and the door, which Victor had opened with his pass-key, swung open, and Anatole Chiffon appeared upon its threshold.

He entered, and, with an habitual distrust, glanced sharply round.

"Monsieur le Chevalier is alone?"

"Monsieur le Chevalier was asleep, till awakened by your knocking. I wish you would make your visits at a somewhat more seasonable time than the morning. I have but just breakfasted, and yours is not the kind of face to assist a man's digestion."

The Chevalier de Preville was himself again—the same half-sneer was upon his lips, but the sunny light played about his face as usual.

Chiffon bowed, with that peculiar affectation of humility by which knaves so often proclaim to their otherwise superiors the equality of crime.

"Monsieur le Chevalier is facetious!"

"I am glad to hear it—it's my only remedy, my good Anatole, against that atmosphere of mystery you carry about with you."

Chiffon rubbed his hands slowly together, and was silent.

"Have you found the document?"

"Which?"

"Which!—why, that which you say you are sure is in existence: that which bears Louis's signature at its foot."

"No!"

"You have come to tell me that?"

"Monsieur le Chevalier knows I seldom come but to announce a success!"

"Well—which of your many hot irons has come out red-hot?—what especial act of villany has succeeded?—for your pleasing countenance carries with it an announcement of the fact."

"The Baron d'Aubigny has returned with news that it appears must have met him on the road."

"What news?" and the Chevalier filled a fresh glass with the Bordeaux.

"That of the young Count de Marigny's death."

We have said that the Chevalier was a man of great self-possession—he showed it now. The trial was a severe one—but he carried the Bordeaux safely to his lips.

"The Baron's plans are then altered. De Marigny was the strongest tie that bound him to the exiled



court. It is snapped by an accident, and Mademoiselle must look elsewhere for a husband."

"Well, she at least is not likely to break her heart. Is that all your news?"

"Not quite all. I took part in an interview between the Baron and his daughter."

"That is, you listened?"

"I did my duty to those whose money I receive."

"The Baron, of course?"

"Monsieur le Chevalier is still facetious. I can wait. When he has finished his wine and jokes, I will proceed."

"Go on, man,—I've done with both. That night-bird visage of thine has soured the one, and frightened the other."

The Chevalier crossed one leg over the other, and caressed it with much affection.

"Mademoiselle seemed disturbed in her mind, and told her father she had to make to him a long-deferred confession."

Was it a sudden cramp in the Chevalier's well-turned leg that made him wince so suddenly? If so, it was but a transient pain; for he looked into the valet's face with a smile, and caressed his leg as before.

"And this confession she made?"

"This confession she did not make. Farmer Bonchamp was announced, and the Baron, who had pressing

business with him, was compelled to leave his daughter abruptly. This evening he returns to the chateau, and," concluded the valet, modestly, "this evening I shall know all!"

"Tut!—what can the confession—a love one, doubtless—have to interest us? You are wasting your valuable time, Anatole!"

"I am not yet certain of that. When walking in a laybrinth, it is wise to pick up every thread till you find the clue!"

The Chevalier laughed.

"Well, well—worm out every secret in Cupid's budget, if you so please. You will have enough to do. But what paper is that you are turning so cautiously in your hands?"

"The despatch for Paris. Shall it be forwarded to-day?"

"No—give it to me—I have a postscript to add. To-morrow will be time enough. I shall forward it by Jean, who will travel post. Is that all your news?"

"All."

"Good! May I request you, then, to seek out the major-domo of this bachelor establishment, and demand some refreshment at his hands. For myself—I will re-peruse this despatch, and add a postscript before I ride over to Pont-Croix."

With another low bow, Chiffon, after a few more

words, departed as mysteriously as he came ; and then the Chevalier started from his seat.

“A Penelope’s web, indeed !” he said, as he snatched the despatch from the table. Here, then, is the first thread that I break”—and in a hundred fragments the paper was scattered upon the floor.

## CHAPTER X.

PAUL LEBRUN HAS A STROKE OF GOOD FORTUNE—  
A COMING STORM.

It was about a week after the occurrences mentioned in the last chapter, that the Breton farmer, Dominique Bonchamp, stood in the very centre of the large gateway that opened into his well-stocked farm-yard. His countenance was as beaming as ever, his hands were deep sunk in his pockets, and his heart was also evidently there, for he had that day been reckoning up the gains of the last half-year, and found a balance greatly in his favour,—there was self-congratulation in the merry twinkle of his eye, and a certificate of contentment in the fleshy fulness of his jovial face. Dominique Bonchamp was a prosperous man ; and, from the pinnacle of hard-earned success, gazed with a favourable eye upon the world. In early life, the good farmer had been as discontented and as combative as his fellows ; but, somehow, he had begun to philo-

sophise—an easy theory to do when the purse is full—upon the “troubles of the times,” and came to the conclusion that as long as things went on quietly, it were best to let them alone. “Pooh, pooh !” he would say, “just let the world wag on, and don’t meddle : better cold feet than burnt fingers ;” and so it was plain to all that the world wagged *well* with Père Dominique. Yvonne Bonchamp had, as we have said, many suitors, but none had as yet found much favour with the farmer—not that any had received from him the harsh rebuff or solemn interdiction ; he was too good a fellow for that, and, moreover, remembered that he had been young himself, and so made allowance for the attraction so pretty a face as Yvonne’s afforded to all the rustic beaux of the neighbourhood.

“Let the wolves come,” Dominique would say with a jolly chuckle, as Corydon and Daphnis would come dropping in of an evening to take their seats by the farmer’s fire, to gaze sheepishly at Yvonne, and to scowl fiercely at each other ; “Let them come ; my pretty lamb is safe within the fold, and the old shepherd is an experienced, and, therefore, vigilant watcher.” Many was the ardent swain who had hastened in the extremity of his love to lay purse and heart at farmer Dominique’s feet—but the worthy Breton only shook his head and said, “No, no, it won’t do, Michael”—or “It won’t do, Jean ; you’re a very good fellow, but you won’t do for my Yvonne ; that’s a capital Sunday coat of yours, but when you walk to church it will be

with some other flower than Yvonne in your button-hole. I have worked hard to get a few things together, and he who succeeds me in the farm must have more than enough to sustain it. There, don't be downcast, but draw your stool nearer to the fire, and take a drink of cider. You're not the man to break your heart for a woman. Care, who's a terrible writing master, hasn't yet made even a line on your young forehead. Break your heart!—pooh! drink, and pass the cider." And so phlegmatic Michael or Jean buried their faces, and their sorrows, in the pitcher, and, with the resignation of the martyr, passed the cider as directed. To-day, however, a suitor had re-appeared—we say re-appeared, as he had twice before tried his fortune and been rejected—and was (proving that there is nothing like perseverance) triumphantly successful. The suitor was our old friend, Paul Lebrun; he had that morning proposed for the hand of Yvonne Bonchamp, and been accepted by her father. Our readers would like to know the reason of this sudden success?—let them listen to the farmer, and he will doubtless explain it.

We left him in the full enjoyment of a prosperous proprietorship, standing upon his own threshold; within a few feet of him, seated upon an inverted pail, is the happy Paul, who, while listening to the farmer, glances anxiously, yet nervously, towards the farm, hoping to see the bright pure face of Yvonne at either door or window. But his wish

remained ungratified ; for the alarmed girl, on the first intimation of her father's approval of the young seaman's suit, had retreated to her chamber, where, with a face bathed in tears, she was kneeling before the image of the Virgin that hung beside her bed, and appealed to her—the blessed symbol of maternity—for counsel and succour.

“And so you will renounce the sea, Paul ?”

“For ever !” Paul answered with much emphasis.

“Good, very good ! it is not everybody that has had such luck as your uncle, Pierre Lebrun—the poor man ! How many vessels did you say called him part owner ?”

“Three ; one from Monte Video, the two others from the States.”

“All safe ?”

“They are all three now anchored in the harbour at Brest.”

“Good, very good !” Then it seemed suddenly to strike the farmer that his gratification was possibly too apparent, for he rubbed the back of his huge hand across his eyes, and throwing as much as possible a lugubrious accent into his voice, said—

“What an uncertain thing is life ! To think of my dear old friend Pierre Lebrun dying so suddenly !”

Père Dominique's hearty detestation of the avaricious and surly old trader was well known to Paul ; he, however, with the wisdom of the parrot in the

story, contented himself with thinking a great deal, but said nothing.

“And to think of him leaving all his money to you—to you—who he would never allow to enter his warehouse doors—and who he always denominated as a disgrace—”

Paul moved uneasily upon his seat, and glanced towards the windows of the farm—Yvonne might be there, and the farmer’s voice was a loud one—

“I never disgraced my uncle,” he said, hastily ; “nor offended him in aught that I know, excepting in refusing to undergo the slavery of his counting-house. I preferred the tar-barrel to the inkstand—a seat in the cross-trees of a gallant ship to one on a rickety stool in a room that was worse than the hold of a slaver. He was my father’s brother, but I asked him for nothing ; the kindness he proffered I refused—that’s all.”

“You were a brave fellow, Paul, and folly is excusable in youth ; but it was a generous act of your uncle’s to forgive you.”

“He’d neither chick nor child belonging to him ; I am the only one of the family now living. The property comes to me naturally. My uncle’s death was sudden : had he made a will—”

“The result might have been different, no doubt. He was always eccentric—poor Pierre Lebrun !”

The farmer sunk his hands deeper in his pockets, and moved his lips—at the same time an abstruse ex-



pression settled upon his face—he was evidently calculating—

“Let me see—the part ownership of the three brigs—the little brandy-distillery at Nantes—the two flax fields near Hennebon—the—the—why, you’re a rich man, Paul!”

The sailor answered carelessly and truthfully—

“I value it but little, were it fifty times as much—did I not hope that Yvonne would condescend to share it with me; or, rather, that she would become mistress of it all, and accept me as a portion of the property: it would be my delight to slave for her.”

Dominique Bonchamp chuckled—he had himself been young.

“*Parbleu!* you’re an honest young fellow, Paul; but that’s a kind of slavery that the marriage-ring generally abolishes; nevertheless, my Yvonne’s a girl of ten thousand—”

“Of ten million!” interrupted the sailor.

The farmer bowed to the correction, and proceeded—

“Of ten million; but her inclinations will never be forced by me. Win her and wear her—you have my consent.”

“But you approve of my suit?”

“Heartily, and will assist it. Yvonne shall know the wishes of her father, and as I know you to be a favourite of hers, I’ve no doubt she’ll gratify them—there’s my hand upon it.”

Dominique extended his hand, which the young sailor rose hastily to grasp—so hastily, that his foot caught in the leathern strap of the pail, and he came heavily to the ground.

“That’s a bad omen,” said a dismal voice close beside them; “a very bad omen. He that stumbles, when about to grasp a friendly hand, is certain to have many an obstacle to disturb friendship.”

“What do you mean by your croaking?” asked Lebrun, angrily, as he sprung to his feet, and turned upon the superstitious Martin, who, leaning upon a hayfork, surveyed him with a melancholy shake of the head. “Do you mean that Père Dominique and myself are like to quarrel?”

“It needn’t be a quarrel—it may be death,” answered the cheerful Martin. “Nine cases out of ten, a stumble at such a time forbodes it.”

“If you darken my happiness with that raven visage of thine, I’ll—”

But here Père Dominique interposed—

“Beware the hasty word, but never lift the hasty hand, Paul; especially against Martin, who is one of the kindest souls alive—only somewhat prone to take a gloomy view of things; it’s his nature—isn’t it, Martin?”

“I can’t laugh like the others, Père Dominique, when I know by what dangers we’re surrounded, and how the fiend is on the watch night and day, to ensnare us; and as for warnings, I’m surprised that you should

despise them. When your cousin Oliver was engaged to Rose Bernard, didn't I say that he would never place the silver ring on her finger, and that the marriage-lights would glimmer round his coffin; and didn't it all occur on the very road to the church, when—"

Snatching up the bucket, the fiery young sailor flung it full at Martin; but that Job's comforter, who had evidently a "warning" of its coming, stepped briskly aside, and the heavy missile shot past him. This movement on the part of Lebrun had the effect of bringing his anecdote to an abrupt conclusion, though he gazed after the bucket with an air of phlegmatic indifference, and shook his head as solemnly as before; nor was his equanimity to be disturbed by the loud laughter of his master.

"Come, come, Paul! I mustn't have Martin hurt, though the song he sings is not exactly the one I should choose for a wedding festival; nor can I afford to have Marie Jeanne's milk-pails thrown about in that fashion; it's lucky she did not see it, for her temper's sooner ruffled than Martin's."

He looked towards a side-door of the great straggling farm, at which Marie Jeanne had just made her appearance, and was now busy distributing some victuals to a poor mendicant woman and her family.

"Hilloh!" shouted the jolly farmer, "hilloh! Marie Jeanne, let them cross the threshold, and eat and drink with a roof over them—the little ones will be none the worse for a warm, so put a fresh log on

the fire. The poor are guests sent by God, says the proverb, and it's written on every Breton's door-post—"then, without waiting to hear Marie Jeanne's reply, or the thanks of the poor woman, he turned to Paul Lebrun—

"And do you come with me, Paul; you've a long walk before you to Pont Croix, and must empty a wine-flask before you start, if only to drink a heavenward passage to the soul of your good uncle: besides," he continued, seeing Lebrun hesitate, "Yvonne will be there to welcome us."

No other inducement was needed, and with a quick step—ah! the wings love fastens to our feet!—Paul followed the farmer into the house.

Martin still leaned upon his hay-fork, and groaned, as he looked after them. When they had disappeared into the house, his thoughts resolved themselves into words—

"What Fate has ordained it's not for man to alter: he sleeps quiet who has a pall for his coverlid, and it's not for you, Paul Lebrun, that the *bazvalan*\* will knock

\* The *bazvalan* was the person deputed to ask girls in marriage, and was usually a tailor, who presented himself with one stocking blue, the other white.—*Michelet*.

"In Cornouaille," says M. Emile Souvestre, "as soon as a young man has drawn his lot and escaped the conscription, he begins to think of marriage. Returned safe from this strange lottery, opened for the benefit of the cannon, he immediately seeks to place his life under the shelter of a hut, consecrated by the presence of a wife and an infant's cradle. He rarely, how-

at the farm-house door. I dreamt last night—and last night was a Friday—that I saw him lying at the foot of Cape Raz, with a winding-sheet rolled up on his breast—and when he threw the bucket at me, there was a glare in his eye that flickered up and down, like a corpse-candle. It's a sad thing, and he so young; but he who fights against destiny, beats the air with his fists : it passes over him notwithstanding ;” and so saying, with another “gusty sigh,” Martin shouldered his hay-fork, and strode away in the direction of the barn.”

Two hours after Paul Lebrun was on his way to Pont Croix.

If any man had reason for rejoicing, that man was Paul Lebrun ; but the other day a poor sailor waiting for a ship to offer itself to bear him away once more to lead a life of toil and adventure, he now found himself a small landed proprietor, and the possessor of, for Brittany, no inconsiderable sum of ready cash.

ever, consults affection in the choice of a companion; for it is a home he seeks rather than an attachment; he therefore applies to the *tailor*, in order to know something of the marriageable young people of the neighbourhood. The tailor is in the habit of visiting house after house, in the exercise of his occupation; and as he is greatly despised by the men, he consoles himself by rendering himself useful to the women, who appreciate him accordingly. He is therefore the person officially employed in case of a projected alliance; it is his duty to “*carry the word*,” and he is consequently a person of great importance with the young of both sexes.” Monsieur Souvestre makes the colour of the bazvalan's stockings red and purple.

Yvonne had not absolutely refused him—she had been cold, but what of that? she was not one of those girls who at the first offer throw themselves into the arms of their lovers—on the contrary, she had listened patiently to all that Lebrun, and then her father, had to urge upon the subject, and had only asked for time, refusing to give an answer without due reflection. Decidedly Paul had reason to hope, and he thought so too, or he would not have sung so loudly—

“Oh! then never despair, fond lover,  
There’s hope while the heart beats high;  
The lark, whose nest is nearest earth,  
Finds her music in the sky.”

But Paul found his music everywhere—in the sky—on the earth—in the wind that shook the trees and swept over the long grass—in the hum of the innumerable insects that filled the evening air, and in the quavering song of “Nature’s choristers,” the birds, who thus poured out their thanksgiving before retiring to their rests; but the principal music that he found was in the contentment of his own heart.

The news of Paul’s good fortune was known everywhere, to judge from the salutations and words of congratulation that were addressed to him by all he met, and they were many while he kept to the road; but soon he quitted the beaten track, and struck off into a wide sea of broom, intersected here and there by narrow ribbon-like paths, which twisted in and

out, as serpents twist and wind, when, suddenly alarmed, they seek a hiding-place. But Paul Lebrun knew each turn of the path he had chosen, though to a stranger it would have been a task more than difficult.

He had walked a considerable distance through this verdant sea, when the hoarse murmur of waves met his ear, and the dull booming of the surf as it broke upon a distant beach ; then there whirled above his head several sea birds, who rose and fell, swept round and round, or seemed to rest motionless in the air, poised gracefully on their outstretched wings.

“ We shall have another storm,” said the sailor, as he looked up at the fluttering birds ; “ they say these white-winged wanderers are the souls of shipwrecked seamen, and their screams but friendly warnings of the coming tempest. For my part, sea-dog as I am, I could never yet hear their shrill cries without a foreboding of danger at my heart.” He still continued walking as he looked up and watched the birds, and while thus musing diverged somewhat from the track ; he had not gone far before he became aware of his error, and halted abruptly.

“ *Tiens !* when the helmsman takes to star-gazing, it’s all up with the ship,”—he laughed ; “ my brains have gone wool-gathering, and no wonder, when my heart makes such a noise against my ribs. After looking into Yvonne’s eyes I feel dazzled for hours to come—it’s like gazing at the noonday sun in the

Tropics—which blinds a poor fellow from its very brightness and beauty.” He pushed aside the tall wall of broom before him and passed out upon a smooth carpet of short grass, which spread itself out till it terminated at the edge of a long line of cliff. The heath finished abruptly within twenty feet of the precipice, and Paul Lebrun stood upon a broad platform of rock, and gazed out upon the immensity of waters—upon the great ocean whose broad bosom had been to him as a mother’s, soothing his sorrows and singing him to sleep, as he lay in his hammock, with a rough yet kindly lullaby. And now he was about to forsake his parent, bid a farewell to her for ever—and, offering sacrifice to the divinity of love, sit beneath his vine-tree and cultivate the happiness of home.

Some such thoughts were in the young sailor’s mind as he stood here upon the summit of Cape Raz, and gazed down, nearly three hundred feet, upon the roaring and restless sea.

The view from this “formidable” cape was one of surpassing grandeur, and included seven leagues of coast-line; and while Paul Lebrun stood, with folded arms and rapt look, upon the vast rock, we will, upon the principle that what has been already well done it is unnecessary to do again, borrow from a great French historian, who, in speaking of Brittany, thus describes the scene before us :—

“Let us seat ourselves on this formidable Cape Raz;



upon this overhanging rock, three hundred feet above the sea, and whence we descry seven leagues of coast-line. This is, in some sort, the sanctuary of the Celtic world. The dot you discern beyond *Dead-Man's Bay* is the island of Sein, a desolate, treeless, and all but unsheltered sand-bank ; the abode of some poor and compassionate families, who yearly save the shipwrecked mariners. This island was the abode of the sacred virgins who gave the Celts fine weather or shipwreck. There they celebrate their gloomy and murderous orgies, and the seamen heard with terror, far off at sea, the clash of barbaric cymbals. This island is the traditionary birthplace of Myrddyn, the Merlin of the middle age. All these rocks around us are towns which have been swallowed up ; this is Douarnenez, that is, the Breton Sodom. Those two ravens you see, ever flying heavily on the shore, are the souls of King Grallo and his daughter ; and those shrill whistlings, which one would take for the voice of the tempest, are the *crierien*, the ghosts of the shipwrecked clamouring for burial."

Such is the wild scene that meets the eyes of those who look down and around them from the dizzy summit of Cape Raz.

The sun was sinking rapidly below the horizon ; great masses of dark and threatening cloud built themselves up, growing larger and larger, and each minute shutting out more of the bright face of heaven ; the moaning of the sea grew louder

and louder, and the cry of the sea-birds more shrill—

“The storm is coming, as I thought, and faster than I expected—short is the note of preparation on this wild coast—the tempest is upon you in all its force, ere, alarmed by the flapping of its wings, you can put about and run for a refuge.” He turned as he said this, and began to pursue a path that led along the rocks: “I shall scarcely get to Pont Croix to-night; no matter, I shall keep along by the cliffs, and, at the worst, can find shelter and a welcome in old Jalec’s cottage.” He hurried his pace, only stopping at intervals to look out into the heaving waste of waters, or down upon the beach, upon which the huge billows were now tumbling with the noise of thunder. “God keep all ships from this cruel coast for this night!” prayed the young sailor as he hastened along—“the vultures are already moving in their nests, I fear, and are whetting their beaks for the prey these waves may roll on shore.” Suddenly Paul stopped, for within a dozen yards of him was the figure of a man ascending; or rather he had completed the ascent, of one of the many rocky paths that was cut into the face of the cliffs. The man’s features were hidden by the broad brim of his hat; he carried a gun upon his shoulder, and some birds, which he had evidently but lately shot, slung to its barrel. Grasping a rugged projection of rock, he swung himself up upon the smooth platform on the top of the cliff. A few paces and the two

men met—with a surly “good night” he in the broad-brimmed heavy flapped hat was about to pass—when an exclamation from the young sailor caused him to remove his eyes from the ground—he looked hastily up and then echoed the cry of astonishment—Paul Lebrun was standing face to face with his rival Keroulas Carnac.

## CHAPTER XI.

## CAPE RAZ.

THE two men gazed on each other for some moments without speaking ; but their dark and lowering brows showed the intensity of their hate—the great storm clouds, that were covering the sea with a sable canopy, were not more threatening.

Paul Lebrun was the first to speak—

“A good evening to Keroulas Carnac ; it must be brave sport”—and he pointed contemptuously to the birds that were suspended from the other’s gun—“that keeps you from the farm so late.”

“These are but poor birds, and I almost regret having killed them, for they have done me no harm ; but there’s a braver sport to come, and it’s for that I keep my gun in readiness.”

“And what sport may that be ?”

"Shooting the night-hawk when it comes too near the nest of the dove. I have watched one hovering about the farm lately."

"And what has made you the dove's protector?"

"Her weakness and her love."

"Love!" laughed the other—"Keroulas Carnac would hold the dove in a cage; but the beautiful bird has wings, and is free to fly where she pleases."

"Accursed be the hand that would seek to fetter her—but let the treacherous fowler beware"—and the peasant struck his hand upon the butt of his gun—"how he spreads snares in her path!"

"And let others beware how they meddle in what concerns them not!"

"Not concern me!"—and the fire of the volcano blazed up through its covering of ice—"Yvonne Bonchamp not concern me!—do you think this pretty bird, that I have tended and worshipped from the time that I was no higher than this gun"—and he struck the butt-end upon the earth—"will now tear my heart into fragments, and make her nest and home beneath your thatch?"

"It is my hope that she will. Her father—"

Keroulas interrupted him with a bitter smile—

"Her father—yes, Dominique Bonchamp is a good man and an affectionate father; but his mother was from Normandy, and so he loves a full purse and overflowing barns somewhat more than a true Breton should; and he who but yesterday would have got the

quick answer and contemptuous shrug is to-day welcomed with open arms."

"You would say—?"

"That I have heard of your good fortune and seen its results. You are rich, and I am poor, and so Père Dominique blows with a cold breath upon me ; for he knows that I have no uncle whose death I can pray for as a benefit—no chance of a grave suddenly opening, over which I might step to fortune. Your uncle"—

"Not a word against him, or—"

The swarthy face of the Breton peasant grew purple with suppressed emotion, but he laughed till the rocks rung again as he said—

"Listen to him!—to Paul Lebrun, who has so often coupled the name of the old miser, Pierre Lebrun, with wild jests, as he uttered it over the wine-pot in the cabaret! Your affection is of as rapid a growth as your fortune."

The sailor clenched his hands, and the veins on his forehead stood out like whipcord ; but he said nothing, and Keroulas resumed—

"But let him who steps between Yvonne Bonchamp and Keroulas Carnac look to himself. Should he dare—"

"Dare !"

"I would shoot him, with less compunction than I have shot these birds."

"And if you met him here, face to face, Keroulas

Carnac, and he told you Yvonne Bonchamp should be his ?”

“I would fling him over the cliff, as I do this bundle of feathers”—and, snatching the birds from the ground, where they had fallen, he cast them far away into the air.

“Your words are stronger than your hands,” sneered the other. “That I love Yvonne you know—that she shall be my wife I tell you now—not by snares, or other fowler’s wiles, but of her own free will she shall make her home with me and nestle in my bosom.”

He was about to pass the peasant, who stood directly in the path he must traverse, when the latter said—

“Her father has promised you this?”

“Nay, she herself has—”

“LIAR !”

The word had scarcely escaped his lips, when Keroulas reeled backwards and fell heavily to the earth, and Lebrun, with raised arm and flashing eyes, stood over him.

With a quick writhing movement, the ex-Chouan placed himself out of the reach of his adversary, and then sprung erect and faced him. The countenances of the two men, as thus they stood, preparing for the deadly grapple, upon this smooth platform of rock, were terrible to see : that of the Breton peasant was already stained with blood, and wore that

savage look of settled hate and iron determination that marks the Breton character when thoroughly roused ; his hat was off ; his long dark hair streamed over his shoulders ; the lips were drawn back from the teeth, which gleamed white as a tiger's. The wild Celtic nature was no longer to be controlled : it was the triumph of the animal over the man.

Nor was the sailor less stirred by the mad tempest of passion, and with an eye as fierce—a foot as firm as his rival's, he awaited the onset.

Not a word was said—a bound, and each had fiercely grappled with the other, straining every muscle and nerve, with one fearful aim in view—to urge his opponent nearer and nearer to the edge of the cliff.

Swaying to and fro—now down—now up, but never once relaxing their hold, these two strong men struggled. At one moment they held each other at arm's length, and sought, by rapid movement and dexterous will, to give the final fall ; at the next their faces were within an inch of each other—their teeth grinding, their eyes glaring, and the hot breath scorching their cheeks. Twice they fell, but rose together. The grass around them was trampled into mud, for the heavy rain-drops had begun to fall, or was flung about in fragments, as the two men struggled to maintain their foothold. Nearer and nearer to the dizzy edge they came. The sea-birds, alarmed, yet seemingly curious of such a conflict, came soaring up—flew round and round, screaming, or with quick-beating pinion fled swiftly



away, returning, however, again and again, to sweep in graceful circles above the combatants. The maddened men were now but a few feet from the edge of the precipice. A huge grave was yawning at their side—the dark cloud hung like a pall above them—yet neither of them spoke. Once only had they parted in that terrible struggle—once, but for an instant, yet sufficient time for Keroulas to have seized his gun and ended the conflict at once; but the fierce Breton disdained such an advantage—such an assassination, for thus he would rightly have considered it—and only locked his adversary again in a deadly embrace. Paul, too, might then have terminated the strife by a well-directed thrust of the long knife he carried stuck in his sash; but he read the peasant's thoughts in his eyes as they rested on his gun, and, scorning to be outdone in generosity, he plucked the knife from his girdle and cast it yards away. Nearer and nearer to the cliff—the end of one or both was at hand. Were those the sounds of a horse's hoofs—the cry of a human voice—that were borne upon the wind? Surely they are more and more distinct, and the cry is "Keroulas!" But the combatants hear it not or heed it not; setting their teeth closer, and taking each a firmer foothold, they make their final effort.

A shout—almost a shriek—and a horseman gallops madly over the platform, and only draws rein within three feet of the precipice. Both horse and rider remained for a moment motionless, as though they had

stiffened into marble ; the face of the horseman is pale as ashes, and he looks around him in horror—the whole face of the platform is bare, he is *alone* upon the cliff.

Again the sea-birds come whirling up from below, but with their scream is mingled a strange cry.

“ No bird uttered a cry like that, unless old Grallo and his daughter have really feathered coverings,” said the horseman, as he flung himself from the saddle ; “ stand firm, Rollo, good horse, it’s well for both of us your training is so perfect, or your forelegs would have been dangling over this accursed cliff, and I lying in pieces at its base.”

Another cry—and then fresh screams from the birds, who now hung in a thick cloud over that portion of the precipice near which the horseman stood.

“ It’s strange ! there must be a descent here of nearly two hundred and fifty feet—the men must have been dashed to atoms ! What is it these birds are screaming at ? ”

Kneeling, he crept cautiously to the edge, and peered down ; he had not over-estimated the height of the cliff, the brow of which jutted over, presenting a surface of jagged rock for some yards, and then, suddenly sloping inwards, made the whole descent in one unbroken line of cliff, so smooth that every inch of a lead line would have touched its surface, had it been dropped from top to bottom : the base of the cliff was not to be seen for the spray clouds which the great

waves threw upwards as they rushed madly on, tossing about the fallen rocks, and seeking day and night to undermine these giant warders of their enemy—the earth. Suddenly, the man who was peering over uttered an exclamation of alarm and astonishment, then crawled backwards a few paces, sprung to his feet, and, hastening to his horse, began with frantic haste to take the strong leathern bridle from his neck.

What could have occasioned this alarm and agitation ?

At the first glance that the stranger gave over the edge of the cliff he shuddered with horror, and uttered the startled cry we have heard ; for almost within reach of his hand was a man—but ONE—clinging, with all the energy of desperation, to a small, prickly shrub, that grew out of the face of the cliff ; one of those shrubs which, springing from seeds that had fallen into the deep crevices of the rocks, grew thinly for some little distance downwards, as long as the rugged surface gave any hold for their snaky roots.

For a moment, as the two foes lost their foothold and fell over the edge of the platform, their vice-like grasp of each other relaxed, and both threw out their arms with a wild gesture of fear and despair—the hand of one encountered the prickly shrub, which he grasped instinctively and convulsively, thus arresting his downward course, and keeping, even by so frail a support, his body still suspended in the air, the other, less fortunate, had swung over quite clear of the brow of the

cliff, and with a groan that wrung even the heart of his enemy to hear, he fell downwards, downwards into the waves that sprang up howling to receive him, and when they had torn his mangled body from the rocks, hurried it away wrapped in a shroud of foam.

For a few moments, the survivor remained thus hanging by one hand over the certain death that threatened him ; he heard the dash and tumble of the water beneath him, that seemed to his strained sense to grow more and more ravenous for its prey ; by an effort he swung his body upwards and seized with his other hand the fibrous roots ; then it was that the sound of a horses hoofs met his ear, and again and again his agonized cry broke forth.

“ Hold on ! ” shouted the man from the platform above ; “ but for your life do not look down ; do so but once and you are lost.”

The other made no answer, it would have been useless to have done so, for the face that had appeared over the cliff was as quickly withdrawn ; but even in the extremity of his peril, a smile wreathed his lips at the advice thus offered, for his was a foot that would have trodden the dizziest paths without faltering, and looked down with a steady gaze from crags only tenanted by the eagle, but the weight upon his hands was each moment growing heavier, and with anxiety and calmness he awaited his fate.

Rapidly the man upon the platform unfastened the bridle and stirrup-leathers from his horse, and with

an equal rapidity knotted them firmly together ; then he looked hastily about him. No ! not a tree ; not a bush within distance possible for such a line to reach—ha ! ha ! fortune favours him—this man who is clinging like a limpet to the rock—the stranger's eyes have rested upon the gun of Keroulas, he springs towards it, snatches it from the ground, then looks eagerly around for some crevice in the soil—he finds one—"the very place," he says, as he thrusts the barrel of the gun deep into the gap and fixes it firmly with a large flint, then he ties one end of the line to it, and throwing himself flat on the ground, creeps towards the edge of the cliff, with almost as little time as it takes to tell.

"Thank heaven ! the man is still there ; for the love of life, hold on !"

The strong line descends—it touches the face of the man—will he suddenly let go of the shrub to grasp it ? not he ! cool in this, the extremest moment of his danger, he turns his head slightly, and, watching the moment, catches the line between his strong teeth, this done, he moves his head close to his right arm till the leather touches his hand, and then, and not till then, grasps it ; he carefully tests its strength before he entirely lets go the tough roots of the prickly shrub—it will do—the knots have been skilfully fastened, and the man above is ready to aid—slowly, hand over hand, he ascends, his head is at last on a level with the edge

of the platform—the stranger grasps him by the collar—a strong effort! another! and he stands once more upon firm ground—he is saved!

For the second time Keroulas Carnac owes his life to the Chevalier de Preville.

## CHAPTER XII.

## FOUCHÉ'S AGENTS—PATRICIAN AND PLEBIAN.

THE day after the event recorded in the last chapter, Anatole Chiffon rode over to the Chateau Pontarlac.

It was noon when he dismounted in the grass-grown court-yard of that very antique and desolate-looking mansion, and, consigning his horse into the safe keeping of a rough-looking lad, who acted as ostler, he entered the house, and proceeded at once to the private apartment of its master. Monsieur le Chevalier de Preville was seated, as usual, near the window ; through which, when we last visited the chateau, the sunbeams were so merrily playing—but now there was but little sunlight, either in the room or in the face of its occupant—the day without was not more sad beneath its weight of dark clouds than the face of the man within. Thrice he took a book

from the table, and, as if to banish the unpleasant thoughts that oppressed him, endeavoured to read ; but the third time—after turning over a few pages—he cast the volume from him, and, rising, walked the room with every sign of angry impatience.

“This fellow is an ass !” he said, as, with his foot, he pushed aside the book he had flung upon the floor ; “he tells us that chance is but the fool’s excuse for folly—that the wise man may direct and govern it—bah ! how could I have foreseen such an accursed chance as this ?—that has uprooted all my schemes and undone the patient labour of years. The reward that Fouché preferred was a great one—wealth, station, influence—a busy part in this great game that is about to be played in Europe ; a game that will make kings beggars, ay ! and beggars kings—none but the owl-eyed could fail to see the signs of the coming times—I saw them long ago—saw them with a vision sharpened by poverty, and resolved, whatever I might trample under my feet, to keep, this time at least, the sure road. My services were eagerly accepted—my ambition known and encouraged—for cunning Joseph saw at once, that a head like mine might be put to a better use than helping to fill the headsman’s basket—his were not the tactics of his old friend Maximilian ; ‘he killed,’ I have heard him say, ‘I buy,’ and he bought me—at a noble price too—that is—at what would have been a noble price—for Joseph promises but never pays beforehand—” He laughed bitterly,



as if in self derision—then continued, though in a more subdued manner : “This marriage of Victor’s upsets all—and since the news of Marigny’s death, d’Aubigny regards Victor with an eye of especial favour—the girl has not yet confessed to her father, though there is slight reason to doubt that forgiveness will be forthcoming—and then, Victor is heir to these very estates Fouchè so longs to confiscate—and which I ! I, of all men—have been labouring to place within his clutch. Still it is not too late for me to save what I would, but a few days ago, have eagerly destroyed ; yes, I would have gained fortune for Victor, and now—it is I alone who threaten this wealth he is otherwise certain to possess ; alone ! would I were alone in this, but my associate, this wily spy—this ferret—that Fouché must needs thrust upon me—how to baffle him, and prevent his gaining that information which, once proved and transmitted to Paris, would leave d’Aubigny without land enough to make a grave—while Victor—my son ! would curse, must curse even his father, who had aided in this shameful work.”

The wretched man bent his face in his hands, and for a moment was shaken by strong emotion—for a moment only ; for again came the three distinct knocks that had disturbed, on the previous day, his interview with his son.

“ Chiffon ! ”

He started—then by an effort recovered his composure and walked to the door.

"No new discovery, I hope—no fresh meshes for me to break—for break them I will, one by one."

He threw open the door, and gave admittance to the smiling valet.

The Chevalier shuddered, despite himself; for a smile upon some faces is the most ominous of signs.

"Why do you stand there, leering and shaking your head in that goblin fashion—yours is not exactly the countenance a man would wish to be framed in his door-way longer than necessary?"

Chiffon entered the room perfectly unruffled by the Chevalier's tone of banter—he was not a man to take offence at a sneer; besides, he was used to it.

"You bring news?"

Chiffon nodded.

"Good news?"

"For the Chevalier de Preville—yes; for the Baron d'Aubigny—no."

"How! you have not discovered?"

Chiffon nodded.

"Have you lost power of speech, man? Speak out the news you have brought, or take that and yourself away together."

The valet let his cloak fall from his shoulders, and, after glancing everywhere about the room, advanced, with his quick, cat-like tread, to the side of the Chevalier, and whispered in his ear—

"I have it."

"The—" but with all his self-command, the Cheva-

lier could not bring himself to ask the question ; it was unnecessary, for the answer he dreaded quickly came.

“The order for an immediate organisation of a revolt ; it bears the seal of the Bourbon, and is signed by his own hand.”

“And you discovered it—how?”

Chiffon glanced down modestly.

“I promised to obtain it. The change of hiding-place was the first thing to discover ; the second thing was to make myself master of the document. I did both.”

“But how?”

“Pardon me, if when the end is satisfactorily gained, I prefer to be silent as to the means. We all have our gifts. I live by mine.”

“Give me the paper.”

“Monsieur le Chevalier shall have it this night ; but it is necessary I should make out another paper, a *fac simile* of this, to put in its place. To disarm suspicion is to render success certain.”

“You are the cleverest rascal in all France, Anatole !”

“Monsieur is too good, and scarcely just ; there are yet some even in that respect who surpass me.”

The valet's eyes had again modestly sought the ground, or the angry light in de Preville's eyes, and the heightened colour upon his cheek, could scarcely have escaped him.

"To-night I shall forward the courier to Paris. My dispatch is prepared, but this document must accompany it. Your forgery, when will it be completed?"

The Chevalier laid emphasis on the word "forgery," but the valet replied without apparently heeding the sneer.

"Before midnight, I will bring it to the Chateau Pontarlac; the Chevalier de Preville will find me faithful to my trust."

"The Baron d'Aubigny has found you so."

The eyes of the two men met—they smiled—but each knew how the other secretly hated him. The bond of crime is after all but a bond of flax, which the stronger villain may snap in an instant.

"I am the Baron d'Aubigny's paid valet, not his friend."

"How, sirrah! would you dare pass judgment upon your betters?"

"I have no such presumption. The Chevalier, as I understood him, accuses me indirectly of ingratitude. I would vindicate myself."

"Enough, enough," said de Preville, haughtily. "You will place in my hands this document, a courier will travel night and day—it will be for Fouché to act upon it; it was but for this I have delayed sending the other papers: without the one damning fact of direct correspondence they were useless; with it they become all-important, as showing the ramifications of

the plot. To-night you will come by the private door from the garden ; there is the key, you can go."

He took it from his pocket and placed it in Chiffon's hand; the valet put it carefully into a side-pocket, but still lingered.

"Have you more to say; is not your budget of news yet empty?"

"The other news I have concerns but little the Chevalier de Preville, yet it was his wish to hear all the gossip of the neighbourhood."

"Well! what old woman's story is now afloat? I am all attention;" and, throwing himself back in his chair, de Preville gazed resignedly at the ceiling.

"A murder has been committed on the coast."

"Only one? The rascals have been idle of late."

"The body of a young seaman, Paul Lebrun, was found this morning lying frightfully mangled on a shelf of the cliff, a few yards above the level of the beach, near Cape Raz."

"And why should they suspect foul play? he who lives by the water too often dies by it. A boat is but a plank, and a plank but a thin barrier between a man and his grave."

"But Lebrun was not in a boat last night; he left farmer Bonchamp's for Pont Croix, and was last seen diverging from the direct road and following one over the cliffs—"

"And so got benighted, and missed his footing—a sad occurrence, but too frequent to be wondered at."

"The sailor was accustomed to the path, and could have walked it blindfold; besides, when last seen, he was making for Jalec's cottage, and night had not set in."

The Chevalier yawned, and still stared languidly at the ceiling.

"Is that all your news? that a young sailor, possibly in liquor, goes wandering over the rocks in the twilight, and, making a false step, is found the next morning at the base of the cliff, though last seen on the top? Nevertheless, our honest Bretons, who delight in the mysterious and horrible, give out that this man has been murdered."

"They suspect nothing of the kind."

"Who, then?"

"It is I, who know it for certain."

"You!" The Chevalier sat up, and with a look of wonder gazed into the face of unmoved Chiffon.

"Possibly your acuteness may have also discovered the murderer?"

"It has."

The Chevalier's eyes widened more and more.

"May I ask his name?"

"Keroulas Carnac."

There was a pause—Chiffon was silent; so was the Chevalier, but from a different cause.

"You are mistaken; Keroulas is incapable of such a crime."

Chiffon shrugged his shoulders.

"When a man is in love he is capable of every folly. Keroulas loves Yvonne Bonchamp."

"Well?"

"And Paul Lebrun was his rival, and a favoured one."

"By the girl?"

"Better still, by her father."

"And these are the only grounds you have for so terrible an accusation?"

There was a wicked gleam in the valet's eyes as he answered—

"Had they been, I should have kept my thought to myself; but with your good patience, I will shortly state my other reasons—strong ones, as they appear to me."

The Chevalier motioned him to proceed. The valet, leaning forward, crossed his lean arms over the back of a chair, rested his pointed chin on his hands, and went on thus :—

"For some time past, whenever these two men have met hot words have ensued. I was myself witness to a quarrel that, but for the interference of Père Bonchamp, might have had a serious termination; then it was that Keroulas Carnac confided to me the story of his hopes and fears, his hatred and his love."

"He made a curious selection of a confidant," said the Chevalier.

"True, he might have done better; but there was too much fire in the heart for the brain to keep cool.

He swore that he would kill any man who came between his foster-sister and himself—in such matters these Bretons keep their word, and he has proved no exception to the rule.”

“But what advantage had this young sailor over the other?”

“Every advantage—he’d money; having made no impression on the daughter’s heart, he attacked the father’s—there his success was certain. Keroulas knew this—”

“Reason enough for killing any man,” was the comment of the Chevalier. “I have fought three duels for similar causes before I was this young peasant’s age.”

Chiffon, without noticing the interruption, proceeded—

“And did not hide his intention of taking summary vengeance. About the same time that Lebrun was seen walking in the direction of Cape Raz, Keroulas was shooting wild fowl on the beach; they must have met—”

“Why must they?”

“They did meet, and that on the summit of the cliff, at the base of which the sailor’s body was found.”

“You have no proof.”

“I examined the spot carefully this morning; it bore every sign of a severe struggle having taken place; the impression of heavy feet was still fixed in the soil; the marks were too deep for even last night’s



storm to have wholly effaced them—and among the grass I found a sheathed knife; it was Paul Lebrun's—his name was upon the hilt."

"Fouché chooses his agents well; you are worthy of your reputation, Anatole."

"Such is my endeavour."

"But your motive in all this inquiry, for you have one?"

"I have: my motive is to benefit myself."

"Yourself!—how?"

"Yesterday I had two rivals, to-day I have but one. I would marry Yvonne Bonchamp."

At first a look of extreme astonishment held possession of the Chevalier de Preville's face; then he threw himself back in his chair, and gave way to peal after peal of laughter. The valet never altered his position, nor did his countenance express the least annoyance at the other's merriment.

"Chiffon in love! incredible!" And De Preville with difficulty restrained a fresh explosion.

"I did not say that!" observed the valet, calmly. "What I said was that it was my intention to marry Yvonne Bonchamp. Her father would increase his substance, and I am not poor. There were two obstacles in my path—one is already removed, and I shall myself remove the other."

"By what means?"

"The law. To-morrow, the chain of evidence complete, I make my deposition before the Mayor of

Pont Croix, with whom I have already lodged the knife, and a fragment of cloth that once formed part of the vest of Keroulas; it was found in the dead man's hand."

"And should your proofs fail, how then? Keroulas Carnac is not a man to trifle with."

"They will not fail."

"But if it could be proved that this was after all but a duel between two angry men, who mutually thirsted for the life of each other: could this be proved?"

"It cannot be. But one person could give this proof, and he, for his own sake, will remain silent."

The Chevalier started, for the keen eyes of the valet were rivetted on his face.

"You speak in riddles, you must solve them, for I am slow at such guess-work."

"This will help to a solution"—and Chiffon took from his pocket a riding-glove, which he placed softly on the table; "I picked it up among the broom, which had been broken down by a horse having pushed his way through it—up to the very edge of the cliff were the marks of a horse's hoofs—Rollo's shoes are of a fashion different to those made by the rough Breton farriers."

"Well! what's the man driving at?"

"Nothing. I have brought back the Chevalier de Preville's glove, thinking it fortunate I found it as I did, for the crest and initials are worked upon it."

Again these two men looked full into the eyes of each other—the patrician and plebeian spy—true types of those evil times, when none were too high to refuse the pay, and none too low to be refused by the unscrupulous Fouché. The Chevalier de Preville had drawn himself erect, the head thrown back, and the eyes flashing down upon the other, who, in his turn, glanced fearlessly up with the cunning eyes and savage protruding jaw—the one graceful, yet threatening as the snake that suddenly rears itself erect before it strikes; the other crouching, but dangerous as the wild cat before it springs. The Chevalier spoke, with a voice trembling with suppressed passion—

“And you! you! the trusted agent of Robespierre—the spy of Fouché!—the jackal of the guillotine!—the hunting leopard, that each new government keeps in leash to run down the game it would destroy—you propose to me, the Chevalier de Preville to act as your accomplice in a false accusation against a man who was born upon this very estate of Pontarlac! What value do you set upon your life, that you dare to do this thing?”

“I only ask for that which I shall gain—your silence.”

The Chevalier made a movement, but Chiffon, without heeding it, continued, in a low but firm voice—

“The association you complain of was not sought

by me—though I have shared many a secret mission with those whose names take even higher rank among the nobility of France than that of the Chevalier de Preville ; those who desired the service, chose the instruments—the stroke is the same whether the poniard has a leathern or a velvet handle.”

“ Do you taunt *me* ? ”

“ It would ill become me to do so—I but remind the Chevalier de Preville, that, in undertaking this business, he had his own ends in view ; in a humbler way I have mine : I would therefore entreat his better consideration upon this point, and not from a mere caprice of liberality seek to thwart the scheme I have so carefully projected.”

“ Caprice ! is it thus you speak of the life of a man ? ”

“ To none but you can this peasant make appeal ; to which appeal you will return, and in all humility I ask it, no answer.”

Even with the Chevalier de Preville further dissimulation was impossible,—the hot blood burnt in his cheeks, the red flush mounted to his forehead. “ This man shall not be sacrificed ; it shall be my business to proclaim the truth.”

Without changing a muscle of his face, Monsieur Anatole Chiffon bowed, and moved quietly towards the door.

“ I will pray the Chevalier de Preville to recon-

sider the matter ; to-night I may find him better disposed to listen to my reasons ; till then I will take my leave."

The other impatiently waved his hand and turned towards the window ; then, and not till then, a bright gleam, the lightning of a concentrated malice, shot from the eyes of the valet.

"Reason waits upon reflection—I ask at the Chevalier de Preville's hands, Keroulas-Carnac ; in return I leave him the Baron d'Aubigny."

De Preville turned, but the door had closed and the valet was gone ; in a few minutes his voice was heard in the court-yard, and then the clatter of horse's hoofs on the road told that he had departed.

The war had begun, the two men now knew each other as foes—it was diamond cut diamond with a vengeance.

Opening a small door, the Chevalier passed out of the room and slowly ascended a steep flight of stone steps that led to a small sleeping room that was placed immediately beneath the tiled and pointed roof. He pushed open the door, and entered unperceived by the room's occupant, who, with his face pressed against the narrow aperture that served for a window, was watching a horseman galloping swiftly down the road. The Chevalier advanced and laid his hand upon the shoulder of Keroulas, for it was the young Breton, and gazed into his disturbed and haggard face, then

pointed to the horseman still visible from the turret window.

“ You have recognised him ?”

“ I have—he is your enemy !”

“ And thine !”

Again the Breton turned to the window, and, without a word, the two men watched the horseman till a distant bend in the road had concealed him from their sight.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## YVONNE—THE FIRST AND LAST KISS !

ALL was commotion at Père Bonchamp's farm !

The sad news of the untimely end of poor Paul Lebrun had been brought over by some fishermen, early in the morning, and the good farmer had departed at once to Jalec's cottage, where the body of the unfortunate young sailor was lying.

Yvonne, who had passed the night praying for a deliverance from the affliction her father's sudden acceptance of Paul's proposal had brought upon her, was aghast at this terrible and unlooked-for compliance with her wishes. The farm labourers stood about in groups, talking over the accident—for so, by one and all, it was considered ; while Marie Jeanne and the two other female servants stood, with red and swollen eyes, by the dairy door, catching up such crumbs of information as came in their way. Nor was this feeling

of general sadness at all affected, for Paul Lebrun had been a favourite with all—especially with the women—his frank, easy, careless good humour having made for him friends on all sides ; the only person who, it is possible, felt a sort of gloomy satisfaction at the event, was the superstitious Martin, who triumphed not a little at this sad realisation of his prophecy.

There was a murmur of respectful admiration and a general lifting of caps, as the Baron d'Aubigny and his daughter passed through the farm-yard towards the house, at the door at which Yvonne stood to welcome them. The murmur of admiration was called forth by the beauty of Eugenie, whose tall and graceful figure, firm and majestic step, would have betokened a lofty pride, but for the look of exquisite gentleness and love that was ever beaming in her dove-like eyes : the lifting of caps was but an accustomed tribute to the position of the Baron, who was invested with something little short of the dignity of a king by the surrounding peasantry.

“ My pretty Yvonne, what is this I hear ? ” said the Baron, when they had entered the house and his daughter had placed herself on a seat beside the young Bretonne, whose hand she took affectionately between her own ; “ misfortune follows upon misfortune, and death has been once more busy upon this fatal coast.”

“ It is a sad blow for us all, for there were none who bore ill-will to Paul Lebrun : he had always a



kind heart to feel for, and, when able, a ready hand to relieve the distresses of others."

"Your father, who I met on my road hither, has told me all; he has lost a son, and you a husband."

Quickly Yvonne raised her head, and answered, in a quiet, but firm voice—

"My father is in error. Paul was to me a dear, kind friend—more than that, had Heaven spared his life, he could not have been."

Unperceived by the occupants of the room, a man had paused at the open lattice: at the first sound of Yvonne's voice, he had thrust aside the dark tangled hair from his face and listened eagerly; when she ceased speaking, he bit his lip so fiercely, to repress a groan of anguish, that the blood trickled slowly from it; then he shrunk back into the shadow formed by some huge climbing plants, and, still within earshot, stood immoveable as a statue of bronze.

"Your father did not think so."

"He did not. My father is, at times, hasty, being unused to contradiction, and I feared to speak to him at once, though the storm is never of long duration, and he is so kind and indulgent when it has passed. To-day, when this terrible calamity was undreamt of, I had intended seeking the advice of Mademoiselle Eugénie, and, through her, have solicited your intercession with my father, for with him, as with us all, your influence is great."

The good Baron smiled kindly on the pure and

pleasant face that looked up so imploringly into his own, and said :—

“ There was no need, my child, of Eugenie’s aid in such solicitation—though well I know how readily it would be given ; but tell me frankly—for Eugenie, I find, can keep a secret, despite her sex—you have a lover, and one you love—or so brave and handsome a young fellow as poor Lebrun might have hoped for better fortune.”

Yvonne looked down and made no answer, replying only to the gentle pressure of Eugenie’s soft hands ; the Baron smiled, and smoothed the glossy braids of hair that stole from beneath the pretty Breton cap.

“ It is from no idle curiosity I ask, darling, nor would I vex you with such questions at so sad a time, but your father speaks his disappointment freely, and laments to all the husband you have lost ; tell me, then, the name of this living lover, whose fortune has been indeed great to have won a place in so pure a heart ? I have promised Eugenie to gain your father’s approval by making this lucky fellow’s marriage portion equal to your father’s wish.”

Yvonne was still silent.

“ I trust, Yvonne, this man who has won your love has given you no cause to believe it unworthily bestowed ?”

The head of the listener at the window was bent down upon his breast, and with a beating heart, he waited for Yvonne’s answer.

She raised her head, and there was a flush of honest pride on her cheek as she said—

“There is not a better nor honestest man in Brittany than Keroulas Carnac.”

The hidden listener started, his whole frame was shaken by a sudden spasm, then he muttered between his teeth, “That villain, Chiffon ! slanderer ! liar ! he has damned my immortal soul !!!”

“Keroulas ! truly, a brave man, as those rascally blues proved to their cost ; you have said well, *mon enfant*, I know of none so worthy of the flower of Père Bonchamp’s farm. Before I speak to your father I would see Keroulas—tell him that.”

But Yvonne’s cheek crimsoned, and she shook her head.

“I understand—love is too delicate a thing for my rough hand to touch—well, Eugenie, who has often spoken to me of this young man, shall be my messenger. I would see two, nay, three,” and he looked smilingly on his daughter, “hearts happy.”

Eugenie caught her father’s hand and pressed it to her lips—

“Four hearts, dear Yvonne ; for my father is never so happy as when he is doing good.”

Keeping within the shadow of the wall, Keroulas Carnac moved stealthily, like some guilty thing, from the window, and gliding behind a range of small sheds, leaped the wall that enclosed the yard, and hastened, still unperceived, across the fields ; he was soon among

the tall broom, where, thoroughly concealed, he threw himself prostrate on the ground, and gave free vent to his grief, sobbing as though, in the extremity of his despair, the iron nature had given way, and the strong heart was about to break. At last he looked up, the blessed relief of tears had cooled in time the fever that poured through his brain the fires of madness, and he found a further relief in the bitter words that escaped his lips—

“Fool! dupe that I have been!—dupe to this cunning knave—this specious villain, who, professing friendship—pity, poured his calumnies into my credulous ears; calumnies against her—Yvonne—that blessed saint so good, so true, so pure, who might have been mine, but now can never, never be! No!” and he struck his clenched hands against his forehead; “Never! these hands are too deeply stained to clasp her’s before the altar! Did she know all she would curse me; the Baron would drive me from his presence; and even our good Curé would turn away his eyes with horror as I knelt before him in the confessional; and this, all this! the work of this man—this fiend who has ensnared my soul!” He covered his face, and gave way to his emotion; then went on more calmly. “He told me that he had overheard her confession of love for Paul Lebrun; nay, that Lebrun had boasted of it openly, in the tavern at Pont Croix—that it was talked of as a settled thing; and that I, I, miserable fool, was the laughing stock of even

the labourers on the farm, for my silly blindness and the presumption of the hopes I had formed. This sudden access of wealth ; Père Dominique's changed manner ; Yvonne's behaviour during the quarrel at the farm—all confirmed the wicked lie. I did not seek the meeting, it was accident that brought us together on the cliff ; his bravado seemed to confirm the other's story ; the blow, and *Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu !*—and yet I live ! Live for what ?"—he extended his arms and shook his clenched hands as though in the face of an opponent—"for what ?—*Revenge*. When was a Breton content to die with that unsatisfied ? Revenge for my wrongs, and revenge for his—the man who lay murdered beneath the cliff ; murdered by me !—no—by him, the slanderer and liar !"

Again and again fierce paroxysms of passion swept over him ; then, when the fury of the storm had passed he lay back exhausted, but with the stern unrelenting look upon his face.

"Twice I have owed my worthless life to the Chevalier de Preville ; when he shall please to demand it is his to take ; but this that he now asks of me is my own affair as much as his. It is a benefit I am about to do mankind,—to kill this double liar, this spy, this domestic Judas, this traitor on his master's hearth. If I miss his heart this night, I will never pull trigger again, unless the barrel is turned towards myself. I, who have brought down an eagle on the wing, cannot but kill the cowardly fox that goes slinking to his hole."

He was about to rise, when the sound of voices came upon his ear ; he drew back, and crouched still lower down among the broom.

“ It is Père Dominique returning from Jalec’s cottage.”

He was right ; and the good farmer was speaking in tones almost of anger, to the person who rode by his side—

“ Murder ! It is plain, Monsieur, that you are a stranger to our Brittany. I will not deny but desperate deeds are done upon our coasts ; but, then, they are upon those whom the wild sea dashes on the shore. The saints forbid I should defend such acts ; yet has the *bris* (wreck) been claimed as a right since first a house was built within sound of the rolling surge ; but to murder a man in cold blood—a Breton, too—you had better not speak your suspicions aloud unless you can show some grounds for them ; all Bretons may not be so patient as I am.”

The voice that replied was somewhat indistinct at first, but when its accents fell clearly upon the ear of Keroulas Carnac, he uttered a stifled cry, and again half rose to his feet—

“ Would that I had but a weapon,” he said, “ and I would slay him even now ; yet I have promised to bide the appointed time ; the Chevalier has my word, and though this measureless liar stood before the barrel of my gun, and my finger rested on its trigger, he

should hold his life safe till then ; my word is passed, and I may not break it."

" You ask for proofs, Père Dominique. Well, what if I promise that proofs shall be forthcoming. How say you then ?"

" That Brittany has been disgraced, and a foul deed committed, for which there is not a man who knew Paul Lebrun but will exact a retribution ; yet, till such proofs are shown, I hold such a charge to be a base calumny, and shall refuse, as I do now, to give ear to it."

" Be it so ; to-morrow may prove many things, this among the number."

" You speak as lightly of to-morrow as did poor Lebrun ; yet he never saw the sun rise upon it. Such may be my fate or yours. Who knows ?"

" Who knows ?" It was Keroulas Carnac who echoed the farmer's words, as he looked after the figures of the horsemen ; their voices no longer to be distinguished, though, at times, the sneering laugh of Chiffon was still borne towards him by the wind.

Three hours afterwards, Yvonne, who was sitting alone in her little room, was disturbed by a tap on the window—startled, but without fear, she rose and opened it at once ; and there, leaning on the sill, his pale face gazing into her own, was her lover, Keroulas Carnac.

" Keroulas ! You here !"

" Hush, Yvonne ! in mercy do not drive me away ;

for a minute—but one—let me look into your eyes, and listen to the blessed accents of your voice.”

“You alarm me; your face is pale, and your eyes so wild and fierce.”

“Nay, dearest Yvonne, you have no cause to fear; but I have watched hours for this opportunity, to see you thus alone, to kiss your hands and bless you, my dearest, dearest love, before I go!”

“Go!”

He smiled sadly, and pointed towards the heath, over which the shadows of evening were fast creeping,

“My way lies over there. I have a duty to perform—an act of justice which must be done; into my hands has the sacred trust been given. You would not stay me, Yvonne?”

“I would not, Keroulas; that which your heart dictates, that you will do; but my father, will you not see him?”

“No; not to-night.” He drew her towards him as he spoke, “You love me, Yvonne! you have confessed it to others this day. Let, then, thy tongue now sound as sweet a music in my ears.”

Half laughing, half vexed, she strove to release herself from his grasp.

“The time is ill-chosen. To-morrow I—”

He interrupted her, and said, in a voice so strange and hollow that the colour forsook her cheek, and in her heart she felt a sudden fear—

“Let none make certain to see the rising of the



sun ;" as he spoke, the great clock in the farm kitchen or general room, began to strike the hour.

"Hush !" He counted the strokes. "I must be gone." He drew her towards him again, "You love me, Yvonne ?"

"I love you, Keroulas !"

Their lips, for the first and last time, met in one long, burning, passionate kiss, and he was gone.

Again that strange foreboding took possession of her young heart, that *certain* warning of the coming ill ; she closed the lattice, and sought the only refuge for the distressed—bowing her head and knees in earnest prayer.

Again Keroulas Carnac creeps, with stealthy steps, along the wall ; he pauses behind the great barn, and moves away some loose stones—something glitters even in that dull light—it is the polished barrel and mountings of a gun ; another minute, he has leaped the wall, and makes at once for the heath, crossing it in the direction of the Chateau Pontarlac.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## RETRIBUTION.

KEROULAS CARNAC is standing in the private apartment of the Chevalier de Preville—rigid and silent as a sentry at his post, he leans upon his gun, and watches the Chevalier, who, by the light of a small shaded lamp, is writing rapidly at the table. The Breton peasant standing thus, just without the circle of the light, his ardent eyes gleaming from beneath the wide brim of his hat, and the long black hair, wildly dishevelled, streaming about his face and shoulders, might be taken for one of those gloomy visitors from the realms of darkness, of which the Breton legends love to tell—who, for a time, have cast aside the fetters of the grave, and re-visited the world, to tempt the souls of men. Some such thought must have passed through the mind of the Chevalier, for, looking up, he said—

“Since thou wilt neither eat nor drink, I pr’ythee

sit ; for that tall, dark figure of thine seems to belong rather to the dead than the living, as thou standest there, making no movement, nor giving other sign of breathing life."

The Breton laughed, but not the laugh of mirth ; and, without altering his position, he said—

" 'Rather to the dead than the living.' You have said well, Monsieur le Chevalier. After this night, I leave Brittany ; in a few weeks—the world."

" You hinted at this before. You would seek your solace where solace is alone to be found—at the foot of the cross. You would bury yourself and your sorrows in that living tomb—a monastery."

" I would dedicate myself to the service of the poor and wretched."

" A noble vocation ; but the ties which bind men to this world of joy and sorrow, cannot be separated as easily as those long locks of thine will be clipped from thy head by the scissors of the priest ; nor will thy fierce, passionate heart beat more tranquilly because thy breast is covered by the robe of serge."

" Monsieur le Chevalier is no friend to the vowed children of poverty—to the noble men who suffer a daily martyrdom, and, in their holy self-denial, preach a lesson, and set an example to mankind."

" You mistake, Keroulas," said the Chevalier, gravely ; though a finer ear than the Breton's might have detected a certain irony in the tone ; " I may admire those virtues, though I cannot imitate the men

who devote every hour of their lives to a self-appointed ministry—who, in bitter self-humiliation, take up the cross, and place the thorny crown upon their foreheads; who close their eyes to the beauty of women, lest the light of her face should shut out the brighter light of Heaven; who renounce the feast for the funeral, and, absent from the board, are ever to be found by the couch of the dying; but such a life, if life it can be called, which is but one long preparation for the grave, is not for you.”

“ And why not?”

“ Because you love—will ever love—Yvonne Bonchamp.”

The Breton trembled at the utterance of the name; the Chevalier observed his emotion, and continued—

“ You pronounce the heavens to be no longer bright, because a cloud has passed between you and the sun; the earth to contain nought but misery, because the presence of a sorrow has for a day darkened your door; but the cloud is passing away, and to-morrow the sorrow will be no longer there. What poison-drop remains then in this brimming cup that fortune presents to your lips?”

“ A drop deadly as the venom of the snake—a drop that blights all healthy life, and fills the soul with despair, the heart with bitterness.”

“ And that is?”

“ Remorse !”

The Chevalier de Preville rose, and said, kindly, as he took the Breton's hand—

“ You shall not increase that bitterness for me. I release you from the promise you have made ; as the gain, so shall the work be mine—you shall not do this deed. It is an act of justice which I will execute ; for—”

“ Not do it ! Who shall stay me ? This man's life is mine. Did he escape me this night, what matters !—in the broad glare of day, in the busy market-place, or in the crowded street, I would keep my oath, and slay him.”

“ It is but justice. I have told you all ; it is your life he strives at.”

“ Were that all, I could thank him ; he would but rid me of a burden ; but through this villain's slanders, a brave man has lost his life. We Bretons have strange fancies—one is, that the soul of a murdered man has no peace, till justice has loosened from the body the evil soul of the man by whose agency the murder was wrought. Such was my forefathers' belief, and their belief is mine.”

“ Chiffon cannot harm you ; be assured of that. My evidence will be sufficient to prevent it.”

“ I thank you, Monsieur le Chevalier ; but it is not for myself I speak. I am here to take vengeance upon the assassin of Paul Lebrun.”

“ Upon the traitorous servant—the political spy—the spy of Joseph Fouché. Anatole Chiffon holds in

his hands the Baron's life and mine. Nay, should he live to speak the word, many is the great family in Brittany that must bow down its head in the dust."

"He shall die ! I will shoot him as I would a dog that had sprung at his master's throat !"

"I have given it forth that I have reason to suspect my house to have been opened by secret keys, and that my papers have been tampered with by a robber. I consulted the Mayor of Pont Croix about it this day, and it is by his advice I place an armed watch in my grounds. The Baron has made a like complaint ; to-morrow the neighbourhood will be on the alert to discover the spy, and they will find him —"

"Dead !"

"The Baron d'Aubigny will be saved—"

"And Paul Lebrun avenged."

"I have appointed him to meet me here, and the time is near at hand ; he will bring papers that will enable me to fully prove his guilt to the Baron. When he leaves, it will be by that door—" the Chevalier pointed to the door of which he had given Chiffon the key—"he will depart almost directly—he has a long journey before him."

There was a dreadful significance in the Breton's laugh—

"He has !"

"Some ten miles from here the courier awaits the papers. Chiffon has promised to lodge them in his hands before dawn. It will be for you to decide on that."

"I have decided."

"You will be concealed in the small thicket to the left of the lawn, which he must cross, to get to his horse; then, as he steps into the open space —"

"He steps into his grave! I never miss my mark."

"The night is dark?"

"Not a star."

"Fortune favours us. To your post, Keroulas; be patient and bold. Go; for even now I think I can distinguish the tramp of a horse upon the road."

The Breton lifted his gun to his shoulder, and moved towards the door.

"Let him *enter* safely; but, as he quits the house, let judgment fall."

The grim-determined look had never once left the face of the ex-Chouan; it deepened into an expression of almost savage ferocity, and his fingers tightened about the lock of his gun—

"His blood be upon *my* head, and Heaven have mercy on his soul!"

"Amen!"

The Breton passed out of the room and descended the stairs, then the outer door was heard to close behind him; the Chevalier drew a long breath of relief.

Half-an-hour after, the outer door was again opened by a pass-key, and Chiffon entered the apartment. Long and earnest was the conversation that ensued

between the Chevalier and the valet. It was plain that there was a mutual distrust on both sides—and, since the Chevalier's refusal to assist Chiffon in his iniquitous scheme against Keroulas, a mutual hate—but each was too skilful a diplomatist to allow this latter feeling to become apparent. Thrusts delivered with the most deadly intent were received as given—with a smile ; and searching questions, so cleverly put that they seemed to defy evasion, were as adroitly answered. It was no longer the elegant, smiling Chevalier, scattering *bon mots*, and careless of the world around him, nor the half-sneering, half-sycophantic valet, who glided hither and thither, bearing all rebuffs with a humility that disarmed his insulters, but watching everything with his cunning, restless eyes ; it was two daring and unscrupulous men—two of the very cleverest of that vast army of spies which Fouché had sent forth to conquer the world—an army which he recruited from the highest, as well as the lowest ranks of society. To the Chevalier de Preville had been allotted the difficult and dangerous task of keeping careful watch upon the doings of the royalists in Brittany, and of reporting each movement of the nobles and great proprietors direct to the Minister at Paris ; which he was able to do with tolerable correctness, from his believed carelessness of character, which threw all off their guard, and from his close intimacy with the Baron d'Aubigny. Yet Fouché's system of espionage would never have been so complete, as it undoubtedly was, if implicit



confidence had been placed in any one man. The world only saw the face of the clock, and admired the hands that moved with so much regularity ; but the internal mechanism was closely concealed, and the “wheels within wheels” were kept carefully out of sight. So, when the Chevalier de Preville took up his abode at the Chateau Pontarlac, Monsieur Anatole Chiffon, one of the most skilful employées of the secret police, was dispatched to watch the Chevalier, and furnish *his* report to their mutual employer.

De Preville was too sagacious a man not to have at once perceived the object for which Chiffon was thrust upon him ; but as it had been, hitherto, his intention to fulfil to the letter the Minister’s instructions, he was indifferent how many of the tribe of Judas it might please the “diplomatic fox” to place as spies upon his conduct ; but now the entire aspect of affairs was changed, and this discovery of the secret marriage of his son had made the Baron’s interests his own ; and it became his necessity, not only to refuse to aid, but to utterly thwart every design that threatened the estates, or in any way militated against the interests of the Baron, as four and twenty hours back there was no proof strong enough to directly implicate him with the new plot, in which, as De Preville had suspected, the Abbé Chateaufieux was the prime mover ; but this discovery of the document, bearing the royal seal and signature, would, if the paper were forwarded to Paris, sweep away the entire

estates of the Baron, and place even his life in jeopardy.

There were many ways of saving him had De Preville been alone ; but—and this showed the evil wisdom of Fouché's policy—his secrets were also known to Chiffon—and more than known, for the terrible document was still in the valet's custody, and was by him to be delivered to Fouché's messenger, who had halted at a village some ten miles from Pontarlac. To gain possession of this document, and supply its place with another, and, comparatively, harmless paper, which he had already prepared, would be his first endeavour—that failing, he had but one trust—the bullet of Keroulas.

“ Your absence from the Maison d'Aubigny may be discovered ; the Baron's suspicions are already aroused. I can trust to Pierre ; I told him to keep Rollo ready saddled to take on the despatch.”

Chiffon shook his head—

“ The Baron remains to-night at Pont Croix, to consult with the mayor and others upon the possibility of repressing this wild work upon the coast. It is but a few hours ride ; I shall be safely housed again before morning ; besides, this is a dispatch of far too great a value to trust to other than tried hands.”

He produced a small case, the same that the Abbé Chaticuvicux had presented to the Baron d'Aubigny, which the Chevalier took and examined, then opened it and drew forth the paper, which he read attentively:—

“ A warrant to raise men in the king’s name and command them ; to call upon the nobles, landed proprietors, and all loyal subjects to revolt. Such is the substance of this document—a dangerous one even without the hand and seal of Louis attached.”

Chiffon rubbed his hands briskly together with delight—

“The first Bourbon gave these broad lands to a d’Aubigny—the last has signed them away.”

“Poor d’Aubigny !”

The Chevalier uttered this almost unconsciously, as he finished a second perusal of the paper. Chiffon stared and raised his eyebrows. A commiseration of misfortune was never one of his virtues, nor could he believe its existence in another.

“Poor !” he chuckled ; “there’ll not be a poorer man in Brittany ; they know how to squeeze dry at Paris ; but this Abbé Chateaufieux and his friend, how about them ? while the net is spreading, it would be better to make it large enough to catch them all.”

“Our further instructions we shall receive from Paris.”

“Humph ! Time lost is seldom to be regained, especially with such a man as Chateaufieux ; besides, it’s ill following a scent in La Vendée, the peasants are dumb as fishes and cunning as rats. There’s treason in the very blood of a Vendean.”

“If report speaks true, you ought to know what

their blood is like ; you were with Carrier at Nantes and afterwards."

Chiffon turned pale, or rather livid, as he said, hastily, "Report's a liar ! I had nothing to do with those atrocities ; my heart sickens when I think of them now."

"*Now !*" and the Chevalier's face wore, for a moment, one of its old sarcastic smiles. "I can well believe it ; nevertheless, there might be safer travelling for Monsieur Anatole Chiffon than through ruined La Vendée, or along the banks of the Loire."

Chiffon had quickly regained his composure, and gave back sneer for sneer—

"There are few that care to look back into the past ; some because they fear again to face an almost forgotten crime ; others because a present debasement is rendered still more intolerable by the recollection of a once honourable position."

The Chevalier bit his lip, and began to turn over the papers upon the table.

"Enough of this idle talk," he said, "let us to business ;" and he proceeded to select such documents from those before him as were intended to form a part of the despatch. For the third time he perused the important document that Chiffon had brought, then carefully folded it and prepared to replace it in the leathern case, pausing only to ask Chiffon to give him some sealed papers that were lying on a small

sideboard behind him. The valet turned, collected the papers, and passed them to De Preville, who was refastening the case. The Chevalier motioned him to place them on his desk, being himself engaged in twisting some silk about the little packet in his hand, to which he appended his seal. The papers were severally examined, and each fastened in a similar manner, then one large and well-secured envelope placed round them all, and the despatch was complete.

The Chevalier handed it to Chiffon.

"It is a heavy charge, Monsieur Anatole; shall Pierre ride with you?"

"No, my horse is a good one," he laughed; "the best in the Baron's stables; and for the dangers of the road, if any, I am prepared." He pushed aside his riding-coat, and pointed to a couple of pistols. The Chevalier nodded.

"Good! those are friends that seldom fail a man in the hour of need. But the despatch?"

"I place here—" and he suited the action to the word—"in the inner pocket—it is safe."

For once, however, the valet was deceived, and the cunning fox outwitted; the document upon which hung the fortunes, perhaps the life of d'Aubigny, lay hidden beneath a pile of papers on the Chevalier's desk, and a harmless writing occupied its place in the case; but for one minute had Chiffon's eyes left the table, but during that minute the exchange had been successfully made.

"Thus much for the public service;" and the valet buttoned his coat carefully over the packet. "I will now again venture to ask the Chevalier de Preville not to interfere between me and this hot-headed Breton; the quarrel between us, though he knows it not, is one to the death—his blood be upon my head."

Despite his habitual self-command, De Preville started to hear this man, who he looked upon as doomed, so strangely echo the words of the other; after a moment's pause, he said—

"I will not interfere between you; I leave Keroulas Carnac to you, and—" he added significantly, "you to Keroulas."

"It is as I wish; as the prize will be mine if I succeed, so I am content to abide the penalty of failure."

"You have a strange hatred for this man."

"Not I, but he is an obstacle in my path; he stands between me and the prize I would—will—gain."

"Suppo this rival removed, are you sure of that?"

"As sure as shall witness the rising of to-morrow's sun, which, if I guess aright, will be some five hours hence. I have sounded her father—the difficulties there are not insurmountable; he has set his heart upon two neighbouring farms, of which I shall shortly become the landlord.

"But Yvonne — has she no voice in such a matter?"

Chiffon looked into the Chevalier's face with the leer of a satyr—

"All women are to be bent to man's will : through vanity, one ; fear, another ; piety, a third ; and so on—the fish are there ready to bite—all that the angler has to study is the description of bait he puts on the hook."

"With such a knowledge of the sex the success of your suit is certain ; but beware of Keroulas !"

The spy laughed contemptuously. "Let him beware of me, to-morrow we shall be quits !" He opened the door, and was about to leave the room, when the Chevalier laid his hand upon his arm—

"Have you no conscience, Chiffon?"

Chiffon paused, and looked incredulously into the other's face, as though he doubted having properly understood the question.

"Decidedly Monsieur le Chevalier is more than usually eccentric to-night."

With his hand still upon his sleeve, De Preville repeated the question.

Chiffon answered—

"I am forty-five, eat well, drink moderately, and enjoy sound sleep ; during those years I have served many masters, but chiefly Maximilian Robespierre and Joseph Fouché. I have turned over, in my capacity of servant-of-all-work, pretty nearly the entire of their diplomatic wardrobes ; but, though I found

many strange things in my search, yet did I fail to discover even a rag of the thing you mean—”

The Chevalier no longer touched the valet's sleeve ; his face now wore its sunniest smiles, the hood had once more descended over the head of the snake.

“Had I chanced upon it,” continued Chiffon, “I might have tried it on, and, if it had fitted me, worn it for a time with the other cast-off clothes. As it was, my life has been untroubled by anything of the kind, and my death—”

“Go on.”

“There's time enough to prepare for that when this world's comforts are more certain ; but I have a long journey before me, so, Monsieur le Chevalier, I have the honour to wish you a good night.”

The other waved his hand. The door closed behind Chiffon, and the Chevalier de Preville was alone.

Alone ! he, a strong man, with nerves of steel, had never felt a loneliness so terrible. He counted the steps of Chiffon as he descended the stairs, and awaited, with a shudder, for the closing of the door. The sound came at last, and the listener, as it smote upon his ear, leaned for support against the table, while the big drops stood, like beads, upon his forehead—the agony of expectation was at its height. He listened, but his strained ear caught no sound ; no sound but the rustling of the leaves as the chill night wind swept by them.

“Surely the Breton has not let him escape ! the



window in the room above looks out upon the lawn ; from it I can see the thicket."

Opening the little door, he flew, rather than walked, up the steep spiral stairs, and entered the small room we last saw tenanted by Keroulas. The Chevalier hastened to the window, and endeavoured, but in vain, to pierce through the darkness of the night ; not a vestige of light, not a star was visible. He turned away, and again descended the stairs. But no sooner had the Chevalier quitted his study to ascend to the turret, than the door by which Chiffon had disappeared re-opened, and the head of the valet was thrust in.

"You have forgotten, Monsieur le Chevalier, the report from Quimper ; it is—why the bird's flown, and quickly too." The valet stepped into the room and closed the door behind him. He crossed the floor towards the table, when the sound of the descending feet met his ear, and, with a caution habitual to him, he drew back into the shadow. With an unsteady step and haggard look De Preville re-entered the room,

"Can that scoundrel have escaped?" he said this in a low, agitated voice, but aloud. Anatole Chiffon drew still further back into the shadow.

"If so, then Victor, my son, is ruined—ruined !—and the Baron and his daughter lost ! Not a sound yet ! I must seek Keroulas—he must be asleep or dead to have allowed this man to escape." He snatched

his hat from a chair and hastened down the stairs that led to the garden, then Chiffon moved from his concealment and sprang towards the table.

"Treachery!" he gasped, rather than spoke; and, tearing open his vest, he took out the despatch, and thrusting aside the envelope, opened the case. At a glance, the truth burst upon the spy, and with the mingled expression of some baffled fiend, he hissed from between his teeth, "Tricked; but the fox is not earthed yet—this door leads to the body of the chateau—good; I know the road. I can pass through the kitchen, through the court-yard, and once in the saddle—" he shook his clenched fist at the door through which the Chevalier had disappeared. "We shall meet again, you double traitor." His hand was upon the lock, when it was turned from the other side, the door opened, and he stood face to face with Victor de Preville! At the same moment, the sharp report of a gun was heard from the thicket that skirted that side of the house; there was a cry—a loud and startling cry—and then the night relapsed into its awful silence.

"What do you here? What means that noise? Where is my father?"

Quick as lightning, the spy saw the only game to play—and with success he played it.

"Help! Monsieur Victor; there are robbers—to to the garden—to the garden! Your poor father has rashly—"

Thrusting him aside, the young man stayed to hear

no more ; he dashed open the opposite door, and, with a bound, passed down the stairs. With a movement as rapid, though in an opposite direction, disappeared from the room Monsieur Anatole Chiffon.

A few minutes, and heavy footsteps re-ascended the stairs, and as they entered the room the light fell upon the horror-struck faces of Victor and Keroulas. Between them, and supported by both, was the Chevalier de Preville.

“ Who has done this accursed deed? Speak, Keroulas !” burst from the lips of the son, as they placed the Chevalier in a chair.

“ The accursed act is mine, Victor de Preville ; the doom of blood is upon me. I am your father’s murderer !”

The dying man—for the chill of death was at his heart, and the cold dews upon his brow—made an attempt to rise, and turned towards his son—

“ Believe him not, Victor ; the act is mine. Keroulas is innocent ; it was for me, for you, for all—he raised the retributive hand, but it was not to be. As mine was the first fault, it is but just I first should pay the penalty.”

Then the dying man said faintly—

“ Had my life been spared, I had done much to remedy the evil I have committed. Nay, much has already been done.” His voice grew fainter, till it passed away into a murmur—

“ Victor, my son, do you forgive me ?”

The son pressed his lips upon the forehead of his father, and the hot tears fell upon his face. At that moment the sounds of alarmed voices were heard in the other part of the chateau, and then the clatter of a horse's hoof was heard without the house.

Suddenly the Chevalier raised himself erect, and, with a grasp of iron, seized the hand of Keroulas—

“Chiffon !”—and he pointed to the window. “You owe me a life, Keroulas Carnac ! Repay it ! Not a moment is to be lost. Rollo stands ready saddled in the stable. Should that man reach Quimper—”

The Breton raised de Preville's hand to his lips, and said, in a voice hoarse with emotion—

“He shall never reach it ! He rides fast, but he must ride faster yet to escape fate.” And without another word, the tall, dark form of the Breton peasant passed, noiseless as a shadow, from the room.

Then the father, sinking back into his chair, motioned to the son, and pointed to the table.

“The paper !—beneath the second pile—there !—there ! Is it safe ?”

“Is it this, my father ; this with a seal ?”

“Thank Heaven, it is safe ! Give it me—and now the lamp—so, my heart is lighter. Let but the Breton fulfil his vow, and the danger is passed.”

He rose with difficulty, and, stretching out his hand, held the paper over the flame of the lamp, and watched it eagerly as it was licked up by a greedy tongue of fire.

“ASHES!” he said, as the last fragment fell consumed from his fingers; then his head sunk heavily upon the shoulder of his son. Victor gave one long despairing look into the placid face, that wore about the lips a smile; then waved back the alarmed domestics who had crept into the room, for their assistance was no longer needed—the Chevalier de Preville was dead.

## CHAPTER XV

## ANATOLE CHIFFON'S NIGHT RIDE AND ITS TERMINATION.

IN the best stall of the dreary old stable attached to the Chateau Pontarlac stood, ready saddled, Rollo, the Chevalier's own horse. Pierre, the groom, was lying sound asleep upon a truss of straw, beneath the dim light of a battered old lantern, that swung from a cross-beam above him, when the door was pushed suddenly open, and the Breton peasant entered. Placing his hand upon the sleeper's shoulder, he shook him roughly. With a start the groom sprang to his feet, and gazed with alarmed but still sleepy eyes upon the disturber of his rest.

"Lead out the horse! In the name of the blessed saints, lead out the horse!—or stand aside, and let me perform your office."

"Why, it's Keroulas Carnac! Well, to think, now, that you of all men should frighten me thus! But what are you going to do with the horse?"

"Ride him."

“My master’s horse ! By whose authority ?”

“Your master’s ! Now you have recovered your wits, take down the lantern, and stand beside the door.”

Without more words, Keroulas led the horse into the court-yard, snatched the lantern from the sleepy Pierre, and cast a hasty but searching glance at each strap and buckle ; then, giving back the lantern, leaped into the saddle.

“Open the gate, Pierre !” The groom obeyed, saying, as he did so—

“You are in haste, Keroulas ; why, if it were a question of life or death—”

“It is a question of life or death !” He patted the arched neck of the horse as he spoke. “I carry death with me ; and—did you not hear that cry, Pierre ?—leave it behind me. Good night !” and before the bewildered groom could make reply, Keroulas, giving the horse the rein, shot through the gateway like an arrow, and was galloping swiftly down the road.

Raising his lantern, the groom peered into the darkness ; then, with a doubtful shake of the head, closed the gate—

“Well, my master may do as he likes with his own ; but, for my part, I’d think twice before I trusted such a horse to a madman. He’ll break his neck before he’s gone a mile ; and, what is far worse, he’ll break Rollo’s.”

Again a confused noise of voices came from the

house, and lights passed backward and forward behind the windows. The groom shrugged his shoulders—

“There’s a something amiss indoors, I suppose, but it’s no affair of mine, and curiosity isn’t my failing ; my business lies with the stables.” So saying, he re-entered the ruinous old barn which it had pleased the owners of Pontarlac to dignify with that title ; and after slinging the lantern to the beam, threw himself down upon the straw, “and addressed him again to sleep.”

After his unexpected and undesired meeting with Victor de Preville, Chiffon had hastened along the corridor, and, descending the stairs, made an ineffectual attempt to open the front door. Failing in this, in consequence of its having been locked and the key removed, he re-crossed the stone-paved and broken floor, and turned down a passage to the right that led to the kitchen. Here he paused for a moment, to listen to the voice and footsteps of the inhabitants of the chateau, now thoroughly aroused ; but his hesitation was for a moment only. He dragged a table to the window, and, springing upon it, opened the lattice, placed high up in the wall, and leaped boldly out, alighting safely upon the soft turf outside ; safely, inasmuch as he sustained no other damage than a few scratches from a thorn-bush against which he had rolled. To rise to his feet and plunge into the shrubbery was the work of an instant ; and, threading its well-known paths, he soon arrived at the place



where he had left his horse. Unfastening the bridle from the branch around which he had twined it, he led the animal out into the open space beyond the thicket, and then with a cry, or rather scream of joy, vaulted on its back.

“I am safe—safe from that double traitor! And now for my revenge!” He put spurs to his horse, leaped a low fence, and gained the high road. “It’s difficult travelling in a dark night over broken ground like this; but I mustn’t draw rein till I pass through the gates of Quimper. The colonel in command there is a creature of Fouché’s, and will only be too happy to do a something which may raise him in the estimation of his master. It will be a grand *coup* to have these cursed aristocrats all laid by the heels tomorrow. Ha ha! Monsieur le Chevalier shall pay dearly for this. Joseph Fouché never forgives a traitor—that is a traitor to himself—*diable!*” And he struck his spurs again and again into his horse’s side, till the animal seemed to fly rather than gallop over the ground, “to think of my being thus outwitted: this comes of trusting these aristocrats—we must needs go by law—the First Consul has always that word in his mouth, and Fouché, like the cat, delights to play with the mouse ere he kills it. Robespierre’s course was the wiser—he cut the gordian knot with the axe—and let those who liked argue the law of the case afterwards. Yes, Maximilian was right, and the guillotine is the only true regenerator of mankind.

Bonaparte thinks differently ; well ! axe or bayonet it's all the same thing—they thin the population to give honest men like myself elbow room and opportunity to live. '

The Spy laughed, checked his horse's speed for a moment, and turned half round in his saddle to glance at a dark mass of building, which rose up black and solitary, a short distance to the left. " Bonchamp's farm—not a light to be seen ; my future father-in-law is a man of rule, and has sought his bed hours ago—an excellent man, sober, and plodding as one of his own oxen, and as obstinate as——hilloh ! they are not all asleep ; the house has opened an eye ; there's a light, and at Yvonne's lattice, too,"—he said this between his closed teeth,—“waiting for Keroulas, perhaps, to talk love nonsense from the window : well, well, she will have to wait long enough after to-night—‘ My poor Yvonne does nothing but weep and pray,’ said her father ; and to-morrow I promise that she shall have cause to do both. Come,” he said to the horse, as he again urged it into a galop, “ push on ! you must make up for lost time ; every minute has its value ; and like a fool I've wasted three in watching that window. Parbleu ! if there's gratitude in a minister, I may look higher for a mate than the daughter of a Breton farmer. Once my birds safely netted, and then away to Paris, to see what fortune awaits me ! ”

The Spy had left the farm nearly a mile behind him, and had entered upon one of those long, desolate

tracks of heath so frequent in Brittany, giving to its scenery that wild and savage aspect, the constant contemplation of which must, in a great measure, influence the sad and sombre character of its peasantry. In the day-time, for miles, the vast sea of heath and broom might be seen stretching on either hand, its dreary monotony diversified only by masses of rock, on the sides and summits of which grew, sparingly, long grasses and flowers. Man is but rarely seen, except in the neighbourhood of some isolated farm, that rises, cold and unsheltered, save by a few miserable trees, like a solitary island in a vast and melancholy sea ; it is a land that grows nothing well but men ; a hard, phlegmatic, stubborn race, that for centuries made itself a name in history, as one never at peace ; for “ when they were not fighting at home,” says the chronicler, “ they were fighting abroad ;” and “ when they could not find a rich war abroad, they remained at home and fought with each other.” Even the women often showed themselves to be true children of this wild and rugged land, from Froissart’s favourite heroine, Jane de Montfort, “ who had a man’s courage and a lion’s heart,” to the no less indomitable heroines who often fought side by side with their husbands against the Republicans in Brittany and La Vendée. A savage, but noble race, now rapidly passing away before those mighty conquerors and missionaries of civilisation, the printing press and the steam engine ; light is beginning to stream across the barren wastes,

and iron roads to traverse the gloomy heaths, and soon, that Brittany, now so famous in chronicle and song, will, as a land of poetry and romance, be known no more.

Not that Monsieur Anatole Chiffon was much troubled by reflections as to either the past or the future of Brittany ; he was, essentially, a man of the present, and, moreover, the night was still so dark that objects, unless within a short distance, were totally invisible ; twice he had to dismount, to assure himself that he was in the right road, by a closer examination of—now a peculiar block of stone, and then a tree, which served as landmarks for the travellers in this sterile wilderness.

“It’s lighter than it was,” said the Spy, after having dismounted for the second time, “but the moon still keeps herself behind her black veil. I’d give something for just one smile from her bright face ; for, once out of this labyrinth of heath and broom, I’ve an easy, if a long ride before me : luckily, the Baron’s horse is a good one, and keeps her pace well, even though she carries her master’s death-warrant on her back ; certainly, the Baron’s fate is a hard one—friend, valet, and horse, all in a conspiracy against him !” and the rascal laughed so heartily at the idea, that he nearly rolled from the saddle. “But what could have induced the Chevalier to play us false after all ? was it repentance at the eleventh hour ? No ! de Preville is not so weak as that ; nor could it have been his friend-

ship for d'Aubigny ; it would be rather too late in the day to think of *that*—ah ! I think I have it ; Victor and Mademoiselle d'Aubigny—they've been loving of late ; yes, it must be so ; only find out in what direction a man's interest lies, and you've at once got the key to his actions ; this death of Marigny was the one obstacle removed ; and the Baron's consent gained, Victor de Preville would come in for the entire of the estates, instead of the Chevalier being indebted to Fouché for a small slice of them. Why, what an ass I've been ! should a murmur of this get to Paris, my reputation would be gone for ever,—not to have seen these doves billing and cooing directly under my nose ! Bother the women ! they're always disarranging our plans ! when they once get mixed up in an affair, there's no reckoning upon a man's line of conduct for an hour ; for my part, I should be content if there were no such thing as love in the world ; however, it never lasts long, and that's a consolation."

After this philosophical and highly Christian remark, Monsieur Anatole Chiffon rode on for some time in silence ; only indulging in an occasional ebullition of temper as the horse made a false step upon the uneven ground, or diverged from the beaten track : suddenly, however, he reigned in the horse, and wheeling round in the saddle, bent forward and listened attentively—

"I could have sworn I heard the tramp of a horse's hoofs carried along by the wind ; is it possible

I can be pursued? Very possible—Stay!” For the third time he dismounted, and placed his ear to the ground. Yes, there was no longer room for doubt; the sound was that of a horse rapidly approaching. In a minute Chiffon was in the saddle, and, urging his horse to the top of its speed, literally flew over the uneven road; without, for a moment, slaking his pace, he turned in the saddle, and again and again endeavoured to penetrate the thick wall of darkness that rose up between him and the distant horseman. “Can it be the Chevalier—or Victor de Preville? Surely, if bent upon such a chace, there would be more than one. Most likely it is some solitary traveller, who, like myself, endeavours to shorten by speed his journey over this gloomy waste. However, be he enemy or friend, he will find Anatole Chiffon prepared,” and the spy drew forth first one, and then the other of his pistols, and carefully examined their priming, “Right!” he said; “there’s but little to fear: it is but one man that approaches, and I have here what is equal to the lives of two; besides, in so dark a night as this, I have but to draw rein, and diverge slightly from this beaten track, and the horseman, whoever he is, will pass without knowing there has been any one within a mile of him, for the wind blows towards me.”

The quick tramp of the horse’s feet came nearer and nearer; one thing was certain, that the approaching horseman was better mounted than the treacherous valet. “I must let him pass me,” muttered the latter;

and, by a jerk of the rein, he turned his horse's head in a contrary direction to that they had been pursuing. "About a quarter of a mile to the right there is another road—a worse road than this, if possible—but needs must, I suppose. Yet, if I can find good cover, I will make a halt till he has passed." The desired shelter was soon found, and horse and man were effectually concealed behind a mass of rock that stood, vast and solitary, among the heath, some fifty yards from the road. A few minutes, and bursting, as it were, through the darkness, came the horseman, the sound of whose approach had created so much uneasiness to Chiffon. He was riding at a headlong speed, and the horse's loud panting was painful to hear; yet not for a moment did the rider slacken his pace, but with head bent forward over the animal's neck, appeared, while urging him forward, to seek some object in the gloom before him. He was passing onwards, like a whirlwind, when loud, clear, and sonorous, the neigh of a horse rang through the air; and, as though it had recognised a friend, the animal bestrode by the strange rider halted abruptly, and, raising its head proudly, gave back the cry; at the same time, a horseman darted out—for concealment was now impossible—from behind the rock, and galloped swiftly across the heath.

A shout from the stranger met the valet's ears, but it only served as an inducement to quicken his flight, for, by the tones of the voice, he now knew his

pursuer to be Keroulas Carnac. Yes, it was all plain enough now—the Baron's horse had recognised a friend in Rollo ; too often had they journeyed side by side to pass each other without a note of joyful recognition, and it was with many an imprecation upon the poor brute that Chiffon urged her onwards, by cruelly goading with his spurs her foam and blood-streaked sides.

“ Halt, Anatole Chiffon ! Liar ! murderer ! spy ! it is I, Keroulas Carnac ! ”

The valet made no answer, but struck his heel yet more fiercely into the sides of his horse, and the poor tortured brute, redoubling its efforts, began to increase the distance between Chiffon and his pursuer.

“ Dog ! my rifle can carry further than your heart ! Draw rein, I say—or I will fire upon you as you ride.”

The valet glanced over his shoulder, each minute was giving him an advantage over his pursuer ; a few more yards, and to take aim—even with a Breton's “ nightbird ” eye—would be impossible, for the darkness would form a barrier between them as impervious as the shield of Achilles.

With a laugh of defiance, the valet replied to the threat, and, by a stroke of the spur, sent the horse forward ; a few more bounds and the curtain of the night had closed around them, and nothing but the quick beat of the horse's hoofs guided the Breton in his



pursuit. Suddenly, from the very depth of the darkness, came a cry—the agonised cry of a horse. Madened by the promised security, again and again had the valet used the spur, when the horse made one long leap forward, then a loose fragment of rock rolled away from under its fore feet, and, in a moment, horse and rider came to the ground. For a minute or two both remained stunned, and motionless, but when Rollo came thundering on, Keroulas Carnac was boldly confronted by Anatole Chiffon, who stood, a pistol in each hand, by the still prostrate horse.

The enraged Breton would have rode him down at once, but the noble animal he bestrode refused to take part in the terrible animosities of man, and swerved aside; it was lucky that he did so, for, at the same moment, a well-directed bullet whizzed past the Breton's cheek, so near that it carried away a portion of the flesh, and Keroulas felt the warm blood trickling down his face. Without a moment's pause, the peasant rose in his saddle and fired—his boast had not been without reason—he had no occasion for a second shot, for the wretched spy, uttering a cry of agony, stumbled heavily forward and fell upon his face.

The Breton sprung from the saddle and advanced towards the fallen man—

“It is a righteous act, and one that will bring peace to the soul of poor Lebrun—for this poor wretch too, shall masses be said and Christian sepulture given—yes, I will carry back the body with me,

and before them all avow the retributive deed—it is an act I am prepared to justify, or content to abide the penalty.” Throwing aside his rifle, he stooped over the valet, then, with a cry, started back, for his eye looked down the deadly tube of Chiffon’s second pistol. The spy had half risen from the ground—a look of fiend-like malice was upon his face—a menacing laugh broke from his lips—and, with a finger steadied by hate, he pulled the fatal trigger, a sharp report followed, and, without even a groan, Keroulas Carnac fell backwards a corpse !

\* \* \* \* \*

Day broke over the vast and solitary heath ; the cold grey dawn crept up the sky, and rendered the desolation below yet more saddening and apparent ; a chill wind blew from the distant sea, and stirred with its salt breath the tall broom and long slender grasses, but not a sound disturbed this dreary solitude, not a bird sprung upwards to welcome the coming light : time passed, however, and the light grew brighter and brighter, till the huge masses of rock that were scattered about stood out boldly against the sky in many an uncouth and fantastic shape, and the few solitary trees “ each held a withered hand ” to heaven to catch the first warm rays of the life-giving sun.

Day ! it was broad day now, birds were singing in the air, and the pleasant murmur of innumerable insects was everywhere around ; the light of the sun flowed in wavelets of gold over all things ; flowers

before unseen raised their graceful heads, and, beautiful as women, who, in their exquisite weakness, cling to the rougher manhood by their side, shed many an unlooked-for charm about the broken masses of rock from whose crevices they sprung. The sound, too, of human voices now broke upon the silence, but the tones were discordant and harsh, and the aspect of the men who uttered them, savage and lowering. These were the dwellers upon the heath—miners, as might be guessed by the iron lamp that each carried suspended to his belt, for there were lead mines in the neighbourhood. The miners are grouped around two horses that they have come upon, grazing quietly among the stone and rock.

“This one has had a severe fall, its knees are broken, and there is a wound in the shoulder,” said a miner, as he rose from a careful examination of one of the horses.

“This one is without a scratch,” said another ; “but when a man meets with horses, saddled and bridled, roaming over the heaths, it is but natural to ask where are the riders ?”

“**HERE !**”

The man who uttered this last exclamation was standing near one of the large fragments of rock that lay everywhere about the heath. His comrades, in a second, were gathered around him. There they stood, grave and silent, forming a ring about two bodies—one that of a small, attenuated man, who lay upon his

face, and who had evidently bled to death from a wound in the neck, a large stain of blood darkening the grass around him ; the other presented the fine athletic figure of a man who had been cut off in the full vigour of life : the means were but too apparent—a slender crimson stream having trickled from a small round hole in the forehead—the fatal entrance by which the bullet had found its passage to the brain. Upon the one face, the finger of death had fixed, as in marble, a look of wicked triumph ; while the other seemed to retain, even in death, a look of horrified astonishment.

Thus terminated the ride of Anatole Chiffon, and the life of Keroulas Carnac.

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A year has elapsed, and a heavy sorrow has crossed the threshold, and darkened the hearth of Dominique Bonchamp—the head of the old farmer is bowed with grief, and his hearty laugh is no longer heard : the aspect of his farm is also changed ; the busy life is there, as heretofore, but it is no longer the joyous life that we have witnessed, when labour performed its task to the music of its own song—and the heart sang to lighten the work of the hands. What is the reason of this desolation that reigns around ? Can ought have happened to Yvonne ? Is it that she is dead ? Alas ! yes, dead to the world and its joys ; dead to the despairing father and sorrowing friends ; the con-

vent doors have closed upon her young life, and over her bent head has fallen the consecrated veil.

“Farewell, dear, dear father, and friends!” said the poor girl, as she took leave of the sad group who conducted her to the steps of the altar. “I will never so utterly forget the world as to cease to pray for your happiness.” She then pressed to her bosom the weeping Eugenie, who, with her husband and father, stood near her, and, kissing her on both cheeks, said, “You are a wife, Madame de Preville—a good, true, and loving wife; yours is a love that has stood the test of sorrow, and such a love would mine have been for Keroulas Carnac; but it was not to be: may your life, dear sister, for you must let me call you so, be happier than mine.” She ceased, and Victor and the Baron, obeying a gesture from the abbess, drew Eugenie away, while the nuns gathered around the gentle and pure-souled sister.

But a little month has flown, when a nun, a good, kind creature, whom sympathy had drawn towards the young novice, knocks softly at the door of her cell. There was no answer; she knocked again; and then, turning the handle of the door, glanced within. Yes, the room was occupied;—near the grated window, Yvonne was kneeling, her eyes fixed upon the crucifix that hung against the wall, while the bright rays of the sun poured down upon her face and illumined it as with a glory; the good sister entered the room, and, stepping softly across the floor, stooped over the kneel-

ing girl and pressed a kiss upon her forehead. Scarcely had she done so, than she started back in alarm; the forehead was cold as marble, and no breath came through the parted lips: the beautiful casket was there, but the priceless jewel was gone,—the last breath of life had passed away in prayer. Yvonne's petition had been granted, and her pure soul was in Heaven.

END OF HOODED SNAKE.

# POOR POPPLETON.

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## CHAPTER I.

IN a pleasant little sitting-room of a Margate lodging-house two persons are variously engaged and both intent upon their engagements ; as these persons—male and female—have much to do with the story we are about to relate, we think it necessary to introduce them at once, by name, to that profound and august personage—the reader.

Mr. and Mrs. —(we beg the lady's pardon)—Mrs. and Mr. Thomas Dowse are as worthy a couple as ever turned their backs, for a time, upon the smoke of London, to inhale the salt breeze, and devour the savoury shrimp upon the sandy shore of that cockney paradise, the Isle of Thanet.

Mr. Thomas Dowse is a citizen of London, who, after many years of toil, has succeeded in two things : the first, in making a small fortune from his business,

that of retail hosier in Bucklersbury,—the second, in being nominated to represent his ward, in that most glorious of our city's institutions—the court of Common Council. It has been his custom each year to, as he would express it, “rub the rust off” at the sea-side ; and as, during the present year, the incrustation was unusually thick, the rubbing process had been commenced proportionately early

The ceremony of introduction now having been duly gone through, and the reader and Mr. Dowse made acquainted, we shall no longer indulge in the puff preliminary, but taking the trumpet from our lips, pass it over to the worthy retail hosier himself, and allow that gentleman to blow it, at least to his own satisfaction.

The scene, as we have said, is a sitting-room, and as we have not said, it is upon the ground-floor, with windows opening down to the carpet, thus admitting as much of the sea air as possible ; which, even when the windows are shut, is very much indeed—the carpet, when a breeze is blowing, generally displaying, in its wavelike undulations, a tolerably correct imitation, though upon a smaller scale, of the toss and tumble of water that is going on without. Through the windows the beach is visible, presenting—not the usual “fine view of the sea,” that is held out as an alluring bait by advertising lodging-house keepers, and which generally consists of a distant view of it between two chimney pots, or about six square inches of sand, the end of a bowsprit, and its pendant, a blue shirt, hung



out to dry,—but a fine sweep of beach, upon which a row of bathing-machines are bleaching in the sun, or crawling slowly out into the sea, to disgorge their living and lively freight. The furniture of this particular sitting-room we will not describe ; it was of the usual lodging-house sort, putting forth a false and shabby pretension to the ornamental, as though conscious that the useful was quite out of the question, Mrs. Dowse, who is fat and fair, and fast approaching forty, has approached the window, and after glancing out upon the wide “expanse of ocean,” with passionate admiration turns to address her more prosaic husband, whose undivided attention is bestowed upon the breakfast-table. •

“ Oh ! Dowse ! ”

“ What’s the matter ? ” says that gentleman, looking up with alarm, for Mrs. Dowse’s exclamation was both sharp and sudden.

“ Why, nothing’s the matter, but—”

“ Well, my dear, don’t do it again. I want my nerves settled, and not shocked in that manner. Besides, it disarranges the digestive organs, and thereby spoils the appetite.”

Mrs. Dowse raised first her eyebrows, then her shoulders, again glanced from the window, and again addressed her husband.

“ Come, my dear, and look at the sea—it’s beautiful this morning.”

“ No doubt of it—but to my mind, ‘distance lends

enchantment to the view.'” Mrs. Dowse made a movement to speak, but the common councilman went on. “It’s a curious fact, Mrs. D., that the farther I am from what the poets call the wilderness of waters, the more I enjoy it.” And certainly the havoc he was making among the eatables before him proved the object of Mrs. Dowse’s affection to be of a very different character. His lady—whose early education had been grounded upon the Minerva’s press, and whose fountain of knowledge was still the circulating library—replied, with much disgust—

“You’ve no romance, Mr. Dowse!”

“I have not, my dear; that fact was perfectly understood when I married you.”

“Mr. D.!”

“Mrs. Ditto! I am eating, and it’s rude to talk with my mouth full.”

Shade of Rosa Matilda, this was too much! The eyes—and they had not yet lost all their youthful brightness—of Mrs. Dowse sparkled, and her indignant thought found utterance—the thought sprung from a dweller in the realms of romance, but the words were coined in Bucklersbury. We blush as we write them down—

“You’re a hog!”

The party addressed, however, only shrugged his shoulders, and said quietly—“Very good! then I’ll go to the entire animal—only you won’t pickle me in brine, Mrs. Dowse. I tell you I hate the sea.”

"Then why did you come to it?"

"Because it's the fashion; you're not respectable unless you do. Besides, there's the smoke of London to wash off; a man is like a watch, my love, he must be cleaned at intervals, to work well. The sea's a bath, intended for the world to wash in once a year—it's a very good contrivance, but it might be better."

"Better?"

"It's too salt, and not near steady enough—as a married man, I require quietude and regular habits."

Mrs. Dowse shuddered.

"Prosiac man, and I have married you!"

"Yes, my dear, you have; so my first requirement will never be realised."

"Mr. Dowse! sir! when I was a girl—"

"Pooh! you never were a girl."

"What?"

"There are no girls now-a-days. When one of your sex has reached the age of ten years, she has nothing to gain but dimensions!"

But Mrs. Dowse was not to be silenced. She begun again—to be again interrupted by her husband.

"The sea-side is—"

"I don't want a sea-side. As a father of a family, I find the expense greater than the benefit. Here is only a fortnight gone, and I have spent no less than three pounds ten in raffles alone; and—" Here the worthy hosier, for the first time during the conversa-

tion, laid down his knife and fork, and gazed fixedly at his wife—"what have I got for my money?"

"Fiddlestick!"

"No, I am sorry to say, nothing so useful, Mrs. D. I've got one pair of nut-crackers that cracked themselves directly they were opened, and forty-six sticks of cosmetic."

"Well?"

"Well! what's the good of all that to me? Business men don't wear moustaches, and I am bald; there's no disguising the fact, I'm bald."

"Pshaw; you've no poetry."

"Not a bit, prose is good enough for me."

"Go on with your breakfast."

"Thank you, my dear, but I haven't stopped." And Mr. Thomas Dowse continued the pleasant operation—to him the pleasantest operation—of eating, while his more romantic spouse watched the evolutions of the bathing machines from the window, Mr. Dowse only looking up at intervals, as the sound of the dragging wheels was heard, or the heavy plunges that denoted the propinquity of the bathers.

"There's Tom Edwards! he dives like a duck!"

The exclamation came from Mrs. Dowse. The little hosier was horrified; again he laid down those active weapons, his knife and fork, and surveyed the partner of his bosom sternly.

"Dive like a duck! then I shall request Mr. Edwards to dive a little further from my parlour window."

“Don’t be foolish, Mr. D. ‘When you’re at Rome,’ you know.”

“Yes, I know, but the Romans didn’t do anything so nasty.”

Here several plunges were heard, and Mr. Dowse rose with dignity, snatched a telescope from the hands of his wife, and drawing himself up to his full height (five-feet three), said,

“Mrs. Dowse, as the mother of a family, I am surprised at you ; do you never read the *Times* ?”

“What, the letters about the bathing ?”

“Yes, madame, letters that, to the style of Junius unite the morals of—of—Dr. Watts ; you will remember they were signed Paterfamilias.”

“Well ?”

Mr. Dowse’s face assumed a yet more majestic expression, he waved his hand, and leaning upon the telescope said—

“Mrs. Dowse, I am Paterfamilias.”

“What ! *you ? you* Paterfamilias ? *you* write to the papers ! oh ! you funny little man !” And the good lady gave way to peal after peal of laughter. This peculiar and unexpected reception of his announcement of the great secret—for such it had been—of the last three weeks of Mr. Dowse’s life—somewhat unsettled that indignant moralist ; and he said, with rising and justifiable anger—

“What do you mean, ma’am ? I don’t like that laugh, Mrs. D. When the name of Paterfamilias is

mentioned, you will allow me to say that any hilarity is unbecoming."

But his buxom wife, with a fresh explosion of mirth, made answer—

"Why, you silly little man, what does it matter for a month? When we city-folks get abroad—"

"There's no reason why we should leave modesty at home." He pointed to the table—"Take your breakfast, Mrs. Dowse, and leave them (the grammar, even of a common councilman, may be faulty) bathers alone."

The good little lady obeyed, only observing, as she did so—

"I scorn your insinuation, Mr. Dowse; I was only looking if I could see anything of Mr. Poppleton—ah! poor Mr. Poppleton! where is he now, I wonder?"

But Mr. Dowse was out of humour, and answered, pettishly

"I don't know—and begin to think that I don't care. I am not an unkind man, Mrs. D., but I am a healthy one, and I dislike sick people."

His wife put down her teacup, and said, reproachfully, "You've no heart!"

The good-natured little hosier looked at his wife for a moment; then, walking round the table, deliberately imprinted a kiss upon her plump cheek.

"No heart! That's because I gave it all to you the day we were married. L stands for love, my dear!"

"And D for duck," said the lady—and thus the

little conjugal difference happily concluded, and the breakfast continued.

"Mr. Poppleton's in love, isn't he?" again questioned the lady.

"Poor Poppleton! he's dying of it. It's a heart disease that admits of but one cure."

"What's that?"

"Marriage! He'd have died in those dreary chambers of his in town—that's why I have invited him down here, to see if change of air would do him good, and—"

"And what?" asked the hosier's wife, as her husband paused and shook his head with much solemnity—"And what?"

"And smooth his path to the grave."

Mrs. Dowse gave a slight scream, and a convulsive jump in her chair; but the stoical hosier continued eating, merely inquiring, as a reason for his wife's alarm, if anything had fallen into the milk-jug? The lady glanced at him reproachfully, and, with tears in her eyes, asked if Mr. Poppleton was really so very bad? Again Mr. D. shook his head—a profound and ominous shake, that was as full of meaning as Lord Burleigh's.

"He's double-knocked at Death's door, and—" here he reached his hand across the table—"I'll trouble you for the cold meat, my dear?"

The lady helped her husband, and resumed—

"Is there no hope?"

"None. 'We're here to-day and gone to-morrow.' Very good motto that, Mrs. D, for all earthly lodging-houses. The mustard, if you please? Thank you."

"And you can eat when that poor young man is suffering?"

"Why not? Is there any reason why this poor man should suffer as well? Besides, *I'm* not in love!"

"Mr. D!"

"That is, I've no necessity to be in love. I'm married—now, Poppleton is not."

"Poor young man!"

"Well, that's a matter of opinion; but these are the facts of the case." Here Mr. Dowse pushed away his plate, and wiped his mouth with the table napkin. "My friend, Augustus Poppleton, is in love—in love with Miss Jemima Wilkins, to distraction!"

He emphasised the last word; and Mrs. Dowse sighed—a deep sigh of sympathy; then said—

"And she returns his love?"

"Well, hitherto she has done so; for all his letters have been sent back unopened. Her father, you see, is in the oil and colour line. Poppleton is, as you know, an artist; and being thoroughly in the old gentleman's books in the way of trade, is thoroughly out of them in any other."

"I don't understand."

"Well, then, the result of their business transactions has not been of that pleasant nature to lead the paternal Wilkins to approve of an artistic alliance."



"But there's money on one side," said simple Mrs. Dowse.

"And none on the other," replied her husband.  
"That's just it!"

"I thought Mr. Poppleton was a genius?"

"That's it again! He *is* a genius; and so old Wilkins, like a prudent man, has closed his books and doors to him."

"The old curmudgeon!" exclaimed the indignant lady—for, bless her heart! though born in the city, she had but little of its worldly wisdom—"the old curmudgeon! and you to defend him."

Mr. Dowse coughed: a hard, man-of-the-world, business-like, city cough.

"You see, my dear, I have a friendship for Augustus; but then, I am a friendly man—ahem!—Paterfamilias, you know; and, thank heaven! I have as yet been able to meet my butcher without a blush, and, when at home, I am always so to the tax-gatherer."

"And you are not a genius, I suppose?"

"Your supposition is correct—I am *not*. When I reflect upon the extent of my family, and the hardness of the times, I am grateful that I am not."

"And Miss Jemima, is her heart as closely shut as the doors of her father?"

"That's a riddle that none but the young lady herself can solve. Her father, fearing the effect of the charms of Poppleton—and it must be confessed

that those geniuses are often very charming fellows—has sent her over to France for a time, where, from the last news received by her broken-hearted lover, she is about to be married to a French gentleman; and Poppleton, seeing all his hopes ruined by this unlooked-for French alliance, took to his bed and was given up by the doctors.”

“Given up by the doctors! poor young man!”

“Nonsense, my dear; if anything could have saved him, that would. They recommended Madeira, but they might as well have recommended the moon. I suggested Margate; and, with your consent, invited him down here.”

The lady sighed again.

“Poor dear that he is—so quiet, such a lamb of a man!”

“And so changed!” Here the good-natured hosier echoed the sigh of his wife, and, rising, walked to the window; “When I see what he is, and reflect upon what he was, I hate all womankind.”

“I am surprised at you, Mr. Dowse!” said his better-half, who had also risen and followed him to the window.

“Pardon me, I mean that I hate the sex, viewing it as a wholesale commodity—but—”and the hosier passed his arm round the ample waist of his wife—“I adore it in detail.”

“Get away with your nonsense.” Matilda Dowse turned very red, and struggled to release herself. “Don’t you see—he’s here.”

"So he is!" and the kindly couple drew back, one on each side of the window, as a Bath chair appeared before it; its occupant was a young man, with all the external marks of an invalid in the last stage of bodily weakness. His pale face just showed above the large red comforter that was wrapped round his throat; his head, upon which was a cloth travelling-cap with lappets, the strings of which were tied carefully under his chin, rested upon a pillow. The chair stopped; the invalid uttered a prolonged and dismal groan; and, without noticing either Mrs. or Mr. Dowse,—who had opened the windows, or rather glass doors, to receive him—allowed his head to rest heavily upon his breast.

"Poor Mr. Augustus!" said the lady, as she advanced to the side of the chair. Then, in a whisper to her husband, "he seems worse to-day!"

Mr. Thomas Dowse sunk his hands deep into his pockets, and uttered a subdued and melancholy whistle; but the only words that escaped his lips were—"Poor Poppleton!"

"Come, come, Poppleton;" and the little hosier laid his hand upon his sick friend's shoulder.

"Oh! do bear up, Mr. Augustus," said the hosier's wife, "and—"

"Jemima, oh, Jemima!" was all that their entreaties elicited from the gentleman in the Bath chair. Had Mrs. and Mr. Dowse been at that moment in Eucklersbury, he could not have appeared more sublimely unconscious of their presence.

“Oh! never mind Jemima, Mr. P.; you’d be little the better for seeing her now, I’m sure.”

Thus spoke the good lady, while her husband gazed into his sick friend’s face, and muttered, in an aside—

“And she’d be little the better for seeing him now, I’m certain;” the aloud, “Come, rouse up, Gus.”

“I can’t; my health is gone—my spirit’s broken—life’s a blank.”

“Nonsense! fill it up with somebody else’s name. When I was first disappointed in—”

“You! Mr. D.?”

Never was astonishment expressed more legibly on feminine face, than it was on thine, Mrs. Dowse; but her husband corrected himself, and called back the sunshine with a word.

“I meant to say, *if* I had been disappointed in love.”

“Well?”

“Why, I’d soon have balanced the account, and opened a fresh leaf in the ledger.”

So saying, he proceeded, with the assistance of the chairman, to lift poor Poppleton out of the chair. This operation performed, the invalid entered the room, leaning heavily upon an arm of each; then, with a groan that made the lady start as at a pistol shot, he sunk into an easy chair.

“Come, have a chop, old fellow; it will do you good.”

Poppleton shook his head.

"Eat food ? I've done with food !"

"Then take some coffee."

"Drink ? I've done with drink—all drinks but ONE !"

Here he turned his head slowly in the direction of Mrs. Dowse—

"Madam, is there any poison in the house ?"

"Goodness, gracious ! No."

"Then send for sixpennyworth of the most deadly. Say it's for the rats ; the chemists won't suspect—they never do."

Mr. Dowse drew himself up with dignity, the spirit of Paterfamilias was aroused.

"Mr. Augustus Poppleton—"

" ' That's he that was Othello ! ' " a quotation followed by a groan, as it deserves to be, from the gentleman.

"I am surprised."

"Are you ? Happy man, I'm past astonishment."

Here the chairman advanced, and touched his hat.

"Ax pardin ; but want the cheer agin to-day, sir ?"

Poppleton, without looking up, replied faintly—

"No."

"Any hother vehicle ?"

"Yes, a hearse."

A look of horror passed between the hosier and

his wife ; but the chairman received the order after the manner of his tribe, with phlegmatic indifference.

"Werry good, sir. Master jobs 'em ; but if you're a-goin' so uncommon soon"—here he drew from his pocket a fragment of dirty paper—"there's this little haccount fust to—"

With one hand Mr. Poppleton rejected the document, with the other he languidly indicated the hosier—

"Pay it, Dowse."

His head sunk upon his breast, and the name of "Jemima" was alone audible upon his lips.

The chairman received the money with a smile. The victim to friendship paid it with a grimace, saying, however—

"Wait outside, my man ; we may require you after breakfast."

The individual addressed touched his hat, then, glancing at Poppleton, said, in a hoarse whisper—

"Gen'le'man's werry bad, sir ?"

"Hush ! yes."

"Werry good, sir."

He then, with another leer at the unconscious invalid, touched a dirty forehead with a still dirtier forefinger—

"Little cranky, eh, sir ? Something gone wrong in the upper vurks ?"

Mr. Dowse shook his head, and placed a hand upon his heart. The "noble chairman" looked puzzled, but

touched his hat again, then muttered, as he went out—

“Indian chap, I ’spose. Well, I thought it was delirium trimins.”

So, with a reflective air, he wandered down the beach, to join, and to discuss the matter with, a party of his comrades; who, each one seated in his chair, were lazily basking in the sun. The Bath chair was considerably left for somebody to tumble over, blocking up the glass doors of the sitting-room.

“Come, come, have some breakfast,” for the seventh time urged the anxious hostess.

“You are very good, but—but my heart’s broken.”

“Save the pieces, my boy,” burst in the hosier. “Tell you what it is, there’s no cement like time; they’ll all come together again, depend on it.”

“She returned my letters.”

“Compulsion. Old Wilkins is a perfect tempest; not all the oil in his shop would calm him when he’s roused.”

“I had her promise.”

“Pooh! pooh! lover’s promises are like Irishmen’s heads—made to be broken. Have some breakfast.”

“You’re very kind, very; but please let me die; I’d rather do it; it may be my last request on earth.”

“Oh! don’t talk in that way, Mr. Augustus,” exclaimed the lady, “it’s shocking. For my part I never could abide funerals, black’s so unbecoming.”

Mr. Dowse was fast losing patience—he was an

obstinate man himself—but that any man should so pertinaciously refuse to eat his breakfast, was an extent of obstinacy—for such he regarded it—by him not to be conceived. So, pushing Poppleton's chair nearer the open windows or doors, he said, somewhat sharply—

“There you are, then—plenty of air, the chameleon's dish on a large scale—hope you'll enjoy it—fine view of the sea and the bathers; don't you see 'em come bobbing up like Truth from her well—that is, they're quite as wet, and almost as nak—”

“Mr. D.!”

The husband looked at his wife and coughed.

“Ahem! as destitute of clothing—” He would have said more, but the side door was banged open, and an under-sized, doubtful-aged, ragged-headed, red-armed maid-of-all-work thrust her begrimed visage into the room.

“What do you want, Betsy?” said Mr. Dowse, angrily, as he surveyed the dirty apparition.

“Nuffin. Here's the paper.” She placed the *Times* upon the chair nearest to her hand, withdrew her head from the room with the same celerity with which she had introduced it, and the door again shut her from their view,

The hosier crossed the room and took up the newspaper.

“If brevity's the soul of wit, then Betsy's a very facetious girl. Pray be seated, Mrs. Dowse. I'll take some coffee.”



“Don’t let me interrupt you,” groaned the unhappy Poppleton, languidly taking up the telescope, which Dowse had placed near him ; “I’m very sorry if I do, but it won’t be for long,”—and slowly opening the telescope, he directed it towards the beach and looked out.

“All right,” said the hosier, passing his cup across the table ; “don’t disturb yourself any more about him, my dear, it’s really—but, bless me ! what is he looking at so attentively ? Poppleton ! Poppleton ! very peculiar ! he seems quite interested ! What can he see ?” The worthy little citizen, still stirring his coffee-cup, which he held in his hand, rose from his seat and approached the window unobserved by Poppleton, who was intent upon a something he saw through the telescope. “There’s Betsy talking to the soldiers ; but he can’t be interested in her,—how fond that girl is of the military, to be sure !”

Mrs. D. suspended the operation of pouring out coffee to remark, “It’s shameful ! Betsy’s habits wouldn’t do in Bucklersbury. I never will allow any girl in my house to have followers !”

“Then you’ll have to wait upon yourself, Mrs. Dowse, for human nature will be human nature. I say, Poppleton !—what the deuce is he looking at ?”

The hosier was straining his eyes in the direction to which the telescope pointed, when, with a sudden bound, Augustus Poppleton sprang from the easy chair.

“’Tis she !!!”

He dashed out his arms as he spoke, and struck the coffee-cup out of Dowse’s hand with the telescope.

“I can’t mistake!—the figure!—the walk! it is she!—she’s here! I’m here! Dowse, my heart’s not broken!”

“I wish I could say as much for my coffee-cup! What on earth is the matter, Mr. Augustus Poppleton?”

“I’m mad!” and before Dowse could retreat, his friend had clasped him in his arms,—at the same time bringing down the end of the telescope upon the breakfast equipage, to the great alarm of the lady, who rose, with a scream, from the table.

“Yes, I’m mad with joy! Dowse, old fellow, don’t I tell you I’m mad!”

“You needn’t repeat the assertion!” and the little hosier, now purple in the face, struggled violently to free himself. “It’s quite apparent! Let me go, will you? Mrs .D., why don’t you call somebody?”

“Mr. Augustus!” screamed the lady, at the same time seizing him firmly by the coat-tails, “Mr. Augustus!”

Alive to the appeal, Mr. Augustus released the captive Dowse—so suddenly that, with his toilette all awry, that gentleman staggered back into the easy chair,—released the husband, to—oh! horror!—embrace the wife in a like frantic manner!

"Best of women! your heart can understand me!"

"Oh! he's raving!" gasped Dowse from the chair.

"Beautiful woman!" continued the revived Poppleton.

"Ah! that's sufficient!—his wits are clean gone!" commented the hosier.

"Well, I don't quite see that, Mr. D.," said his wife, adjusting her cap.

"You can feel for me, my dear madam,—as a sister!"

"I can, Mr. Augustus."

"As a mother!"

"Go along with you!" and, with a face as red as a peony, she turned to her husband, saying, in a whisper, "Oh! he's mad!—mad as a March hare!"

In truth Mr. Augustus Poppleton's movements became each moment more and more suspicious. Snatching up the telescope with one hand, with the other he grasped the astonished Dowse by the collar, and dragged him to his feet.

"You're my friend! don't deny it, you are! take pity on my weakness—bear with me!"

"Weakness!" and the word came from the half-choked citizen with a jerk—"Let me go, sir."

"Come here," and Poppleton pulled him to the window—"stand there! now, take hold of that—" and he thrust the telescope into his hands; "look

there!" he pointed towards the beach—"tell me, Tom Dowse, what do you see?"

"A fat woman bathing a dog, and—"

"A dog! look again!" and again Augustus pointed—"there!!!"

Mr. Dowse gazed attentively in the direction indicated, then was about to shut up the telescope indignantly—"For shame, Mr. Poppleton,—I'm surprised at you—as the father of a family I really can't,—it strikes me forcibly—" It did, for the end of the telescope was first thrust in his ribs preparatory to its being returned to his hands, by the indignant Poppleton.

"I didn't!" said that gentleman, who seemed rapidly becoming — if mentally weak — physically stronger; "not there?" and he altered the focus of the glass: "Now, do you see an angel?"

"Well, no, I think not—but I shouldn't know one if I did."

"That girl, sir," said Augustus Poppleton, solemnly, "is a paragon of loveliness."

"Is she? well I shouldn't have guessed it," and here Dowse shut the telescope; "they say beauty's the mother of love; but, in this case, love is the mother of beauty."

"You saw her?"

"Of course I did."

"You recognised her?"

"Yes, Betsy."

"No, Jemima!"

And with much indignation, Augustus Poppleton pushed Mr. Thomas Dowse roughly on one side, made a rush at the open window, cleared the Bath chair with a bound, and disappeared in the direction of the beach, leaving the hosier and his wife gazing after him with faces of blank astonishment.

## CHAPTER II.

WE left Mrs. and Mr. Dowse, at the conclusion of our first chapter, standing in attitudes expressive of astonishment, at the eccentric behaviour and abrupt departure of their sick friend, Mr. Augustus Poppleton.

The gentleman was the first to speak—

“Mad!” he said, “stark, staring mad!”

“Certainly,” assented the lady.

“Poor fellow!” the hosier went on, with a sorrowful shake of his head; “poor fellow, they are often taken like this before they go off!”

“Go off!” muttered Mrs. Dowse, “I begin to wish he had never come down.”

“Nonsense, haven’t you got any charity?”

The lady, who was now picking up the fragments of the coffee-cup, which Mr. Poppleton had broken, answered, pettishly, “Charity begins at home.”

“So it does, my dear, but it thrives none the worse for now and then taking an airing—ah!” continued Dowse, with a profound sigh “I shouldn’t wonder if in half an hour he’s brought home a corpse.”

Again the fragments of the coffee-cups were scattered upon the floor—it was evident that good little Mrs. Dowse was not born like old Sarah of Marlborough, before nerves were in fashion—

“Lor ! Mr. D., why just now he seemed quite well.”

“That’s it,” said her husband, “when we seem well we’re always the most ill—don’t all the doctors tell us so ?—a sudden revery is like a sudden repentance, too good to be lasting. But I’ll tell you what I’ll do—I’ll go and look after him, while you instruct Betsy to see his bed prepared. There, go, my dear,” for Mrs. Dowse still hesitated ; “forget and forgive, you know ; let her knock him up something light and refreshing—a little senna tea or some barley-water—poor fellow, he’s as weak as a baby, and wants sustaining.”

Mrs. Dowse was not one of those who could “nurse her wrath to keep it warm,” so, having for the second time picked up the broken crockery, she left the room with the old sunshiny look upon her face (indeed no other was at home there), saying, nevertheless, “I’ll do the best for the poor young man, I’m sure ; but he’s no judge of a woman’s age, and that I’ll stick to.”

The door having closed upon his wife, Mr. Dowse again resumed his place at the open window—indulging, at the same time, in a prolonged whistle. “Whew !—well, that was a queer start—poor Poppleton !—why here’s nearly a week and we couldn’t get him to walk a dozen yards without support—had to lift him in and out of this very chair, which he has just cleared like

an acrobat. What can be the matter?" And again the hosier whistled reflectively, "Could anything have bitten? One does get bitten in every way in these lodging-houses—all day by the harpies who keep them, and all night by the—well, never mind—but there's no place like home, after all;" here he took up the telescope, and began to adjust the focus.—Couldn't have been hydrophobia, because he runs to the water—water, indeed!—I declare there are those young hussies bathing away still, in spite of Paterfamilias—it's very shocking!—shameful! it's—" Mr Dowse, while giving vent to his indignant feelings, had applied his eye to the telescope; "it's—why I declare they're dancing—positively dancing—having a quadrille in the water—ha, ha, ha!—very pretty, upon my word!" and the feet of the little hosier began to go through a few steps, we must presume without the knowledge of their owner: though be it known he was no more averse to a dance than you or I, gentle reader; his eye, however, was still closely applied to the end of the telescope.

"That's a nice girl—the tall one with the yellow hair—shouldn't mind such a partner myself, young hussey! 'Pon my word!—really the police should interfere." He had drawn the telescope out to the full extent, and was so intent upon the entertainment it afforded him as to be unaware that another person had entered the room; it was Poppleton, the incurable Poppleton! the doomed Poppleton! poor Poppleton! whose case had been pronounced "hopeless,"



not only by his friend Dowse, but by the doctors  
those

“Sad presaging ravens that toll  
The sick man's passport in their lengthy bills,  
And in the shadow of the silent night  
Doth shake contagion from their sable wings.”

It was Poppleton ; but how changed ! There was  
jauntiness in his air, a confidence in his aspect ;  
light had

“On Marmion's visage spread,  
And fired his glazing eye.”

Oh ! mysterious power of love ! what magic can equa-  
thine ! Magic ; pooh ! Prospero's wand was but  
common walking-stick, and Harlequin's bat no mor-  
than a cricketer's, compared to the wonder-workin-  
power, the irresistible witchery, of a pair of sof-  
brown eyes. But a few minutes back and the face of  
Augustus Poppleton was melancholy as a winter's sea-  
—it was now radiant and smiling as a summer meadow.  
He gazed at the occupied and unconscious Dowse for  
a moment, then, taking off his own cap, suspended it  
gracefully on the end of the telescope, and, to the  
amazement of the little hosier, a

“Thick darkness fell upon all things.”

“I've lost the focus ; yes—no—its very vexing ;  
can't see a bit.”

He was endeavouring to alter the focus, his eye  
still peering into the depths of the telescope, when a  
voice sounded into his ear—

“Dowse!—your wife’s coming!”

The telescope was dropped instantly, and Paterfamilias looked up, all confusion—

“No, my dear, I can’t see him anywhere. I’ve been—” here his eyes rested upon the grinning Poppleton—“Oh! it’s you, is it?”—then, in an aside to himself—“he’s as mad as ever.”

The behaviour of Mr. Augustus was certainly peculiar. He held his sides and stamped his feet, giving way to bursts of laughter—minute guns of mirth let off at intervals, and after each burst gave his fore-fingers an admonitory shake at the bewildered citizen. At last he spoke—

“You’re a nice man to write letters to the papers! Why, Peeping Tom of Coventry was a saint to you!”

“Mr. Augustus!”—but Mr. Augustus went on—

“At your time of life, too—it’s horrible! I ought to tell Mrs. Dowse—I ought, indeed, for the interests of morality.”

The hosier could hear no more. He was naturally a mild man, but “anger is one of the sinews of the soul, and he that wants it hath a maimed mind;” so the cup of endurance overflowed, and—

“Mr. Poppleton!!!—sir—a word: if I did not know that you were suffering—that you were weak, sir—do you hear me?—weak—I’d—what the devil do you mean, sir?”

At the word weak, Poppleton, who had taken up

the telescope, had given the hosier a playful poke in the stomach, which had sent him staggering back into an easy chair, whose arms were fortunately open to receive him.

“What do you mean, sir?”

“Mean!—why, I’ve found her!”

He seized his friend’s hand, and gave it such a squeeze that tears of pain rose in Mr. Dowse’s eyes.

“Why don’t you wish me joy?”

“Found who?—what?—your wits, I hope.”

Mr. Poppleton dived into his waistcoat pocket, and took therefrom a small piece of limp pasteboard, which he presented to Mr. Dowse, saying :

“There’s her card.” The hosier glanced at the name and address—

MISS JEMIMA WILKINS,

7, Marine Parade.

“Yes!” exclaimed the delighted lover, who was reading it for the hundred and fifth time over his friend’s shoulder, “Marine Parade,—that’s the nest of my turtle-dove.”

“A turtle-dove sat cooing  
All alone by herself on a tree.”

“She cooed because she was alone—it’s when they’re paired that the pecking begins.” Thus spoke the now somewhat sulky Dowse, at the same time returning the precious pasteboard.

“So, after all, Miss Wilkins is not in France?”

"No more than you're in Bucklersbury. It was all a lie upon the part of my father-in-law, the oil and colourman."

"Your father-in-law?"

"That is to be—Jemmy adores me! regularly mad about me."

"Is she? Then the best thing you can both do is to take lodgings in some comfortable asylum. Now I came down here in search of quietude, Mr. Poppleton, and I haven't found it."

To this Augustus Poppleton made no direct reply, but exclaiming, "Yes, I am better, much better," began to walk briskly about the room. "I can breathe better;" here he unbuttoned his great coat—took first one arm and then the other from its sleeves, made it up into a ball, and flung it to Dowse, who indignantly cast it on the sofa. Then Mr. Poppleton took from about his neck the many wrappers, and flung them carelessly about the room; this accomplished, he condescended once more to address his friend.

"'Pon my life, old boy, I'm peckish, absolutely peckish!"

"Are you?—well, I suppose Betsy has made your barley-water—I'll call her."

Dowse was moving towards the door, when his 'sick friend' whirled him back by the coat tails.

"Barley-water!—don't be a fool, Dowsy; come here." So saying he dragged him to the table, and thrust a knife and fork into his hands. "There, just

carve up that fowl, while I polish off an egg." He drew a chair to the table, and with an appetite freshened by an abstinence for days, began to eat. "There," and with a flourish of the spoon he decapitated an egg;—"neatly done, wasn't it?—shell came off as easily as though there had been a chicken inside—ah! the sea-side don't agree with fowls, it makes them lay such small eggs; this must have been a sparrow's; I'll try another." As he reached across the table he became aware that Mr. Dowse, who was still standing with the knife and fork in his hands, was surveying him with open-mouthed astonishment. "Why, what's the matter? Dowse can't cut up a fowl, eh?—how your education must have been neglected; here, give me the dagger!"—and, taking the knife and fork, he proceeded to separate the fowl into halves—"never waste time in being scientific—that's the way—down the middle, and up again; you see it's good to do things by halves sometimes." He placed the half-fowl upon his plate, and after a few minutes' silent eating, inquired—

"Where's Mrs. D.?"

"Gone to prepare your barley-water."

"Has she, kind soul?—how considerate is woman. There, I shall do now, till luncheon—nothing like the sea sir for giving a man an appetite—hope I shan't suffer for it, though."

"You won't—but I shall, if the appetite continues," grumbled Dowse to himself, as Poppleton rose from

the table. "Come," said that eccentric gentleman, "what do you say, old boy—old Tom Dowse—what do you say to a row?"

"A what?"

"A row—you know—

'The sea, the sea, the open sea,  
The blue, the fresh, the ever free—'

"Oh, I know—but it happens to be always more free than welcome with me."

"Pooh! nothing like it;" and Poppleton, who was evidently of a musical nature, sung again,

'I'm where I would ever be.'

"Never be, you mean," said the hosier, "it always makes me ill."

"You ill? nonsense! look at me!" and Mr. Poppleton struck his chest; "come, if only to oblige your sick friend." But Mr. Dowse still demurred. "I don't see why there should be a pair of sick friends; besides, I have promised to take a walk with Mrs. D., on the sands."

"With a telescope, eh?—ah!—sly boots; I wonder what Mrs. D. would say to this?" and the wicked Poppleton, snatching up a telescope, glanced through it for a moment, at the same time giving a grotesque imitation of his friend's dancing."

"Nonsense, Gus—" said the latter gentleman, looking, nevertheless, very confused. "Nonsense, Mrs. D. is too sensible a woman to—"

"Believe in Paterfamilias—very well, it's all one to

me—we'll wait for the better half, and take a stroll together."

But the hosier had begun to reflect that his friend was in that state of mind there was no knowing what he might not do ; so that, for prudential reasons, it would be as well, perhaps, to leave Mrs. Dowse out of the company—so, making a virtue of necessity, he said—"After all, a breath of air may do me good—so, as you're ill, and want company, I'll go with you, for—let's say—a quarter of an hour."

"Come along," acquiesced the other, "and be quick—here's your hat, but where is mine?" He took up, as he spoke, the invalid's cap, with lappets, and surveyed it dubiously. "I say, Dowse, I don't much like this."

It wasn't the most sightly headgear for even Margate, where every variety of head "eccentricity" abounds ; but the good-natured Dowse said, apologetically, "It's very comfortable, I'm sure, and—

"You like it ? then suppose we exchange." It was no sooner said than done ; thrusting the cap into the hands of the disconcerted hosier, Poppleton took the hat from his head and put it on his own, remarking "that it was every one to their taste, and that for his part he did not like the cap."

"It looks very black," said the hosier, nervously, as they approached the door. "I'm sure we shall have a storm—and—and—you must remember you are not well, Augustus."

“Oh ! it’s all right,” answered the transformed lover ; “besides, I like it to blow stiffish—the air’s like an egg, it can’t have too much salt in it, besides, it makes the spirits rise.”

But the hosier still held back, observing, “it was all very well if the rising was confined to the spirits.”

“Why, you’re not afraid?”

“Afraid ! why, no, not exactly—only, you see—yes—that is—I am afraid—very much afraid—for you, your health, you know, is so delicate—so—”

“Never fear for me, the sight of Jemima has made a new man of me—‘Richard’s himself again.’” He struck an attitude, but in doing so chanced to look out of the window. He started—“Why, I declare ! there’s Jemima herself walking towards the pier—let’s run.”

“Run !—my dear Augustus, it’s impossible. You know I never run ; especially just after my meals.”

Poppleton looked vexed for a moment, then a thought came like an inspiration.—“We’ll manage it—must catch Jemima—here, get in.”

“In where?”

“Here—into the chair ;” and without giving the hosier time to retreat, he pushed him suddenly into the Bath chair, left standing outside the glass doors, and then placed himself behind it.

“Oh ! he’s mad !” exclaimed the now terrified Dowse. “He must be mad ! here ! help, some one ! Mrs. D.—!” But, with a laugh and a warning



shout of "hold on!" Poppleton pushed the chair swiftly off, with the unhappy little hosier, now silent from terror, clinging with both hands convulsively to the sides. The chair had scarcely disappeared, when Mrs. Dowse entered the room, and glanced anxiously round, at the same time observing that she thought somebody called.

"It must have been my D. I suppose he wants the things cleared." She went towards the table, and started—"Cleared, indeed—well, I'm sure, Mr. D., you've left little enough to clear. What a change the sea air makes, to be sure! Why, he has eaten enough for six! Poor Poppleton's share and his own too—Ah! poor Mr. Augustus, when will *you* have such an appetite!"—but how to remove the 'debberee,' as Mr. Garlique (Mr. Garlique was Mrs. Dowse's French master in her youth) would say. She went to the door, and called Betsy several times, that individual taking her time about coming; but when she did come, it was like Harlequin through a trap, viz., with a startling abruptness.—"What *do* you mean by bursting into the room in that fashion?"

"Thought you called."

"Well, so I did"—for Betsy was making for the door again,—“clear away.”

"All right, mum."

She disappeared for a moment, to return with a tray, and then began to "clear away," by the very complete but original method of holding the tray to

the table, and then crooking her arm like a scythe to sweep the things into it.

"You were talking to the soldiers, Betsy."

"Yes, mum : werry fond o' the h'army—got a brother in it—he's in the transported corpse."

"I don't like such goings on, Betsy."

"Werry sorry, mum, but can't 'elp it—if you wos a sittin h'alone all day an' night in a damp kitchen, with nothing but critics and beadles, you'd be glad to keep kump'ny when you'd the chance."

"Oh, it's h'easy to say go along," said Betsy, whose tongue seemed to have become suddenly unlocked, "but human beings is human beings, and not mermaids. Servants has their feelinx, and can't be a rubbin' an' a scrubbin' an' a wearin' themselves to skillingtons for nothink."

"Clear away, you impudent girl."

"There's no imperence intended—but if you wos catched up as I h'am, you'd be 'rasperated to. I works like a nigger—a black nigger, I does."

"Well, that's a good girl, say no more about it—have you made Mr. Poppleton's barley water?" This query overtook Betsy as she was staggering towards the door with the tray ; she made no halt in her progress, but flung the answer over her shoulder, "In course I has, a hour ago."

"Bless me ! how you've over-loaded the tray, you'll break all the things ; do go gently, you stupid girl."

"Lor ! mum ! never broke nothink in all my life,"

and banging the door open with the tray, Betsy disappeared ; the door shut behind her, and there was silence for a moment, then an avalanche of crockery was heard descending the stairs. Mrs. Dowse threw up her arms with horror.

“ There go the tea-things ! ”

A heavier and more solid body now bumped slowly from stair to stair.

“ And there goes Betsy ! ”

It was but too true, Mrs. Dowse's prophecy had been fulfilled ; and when she rushed to the door and looked down the stairs, there she saw the placid Betsy sitting on the very bottom of the flight, gazing upon the ruins of China, with a countenance as dirty and apathetic as that of Mr. Commissioner Yeh.

## CHAPTER III.

To those of our readers who have been to Margate, we have no occasion to describe the bathing establishments of that highly salubrious place. To those of our readers who have not been to Margate, we advise them to go there, for a week, at least, and taste of pleasures that defy description. A row of dwarfish-looking sheds, with painted fronts, brass-knocked doors; small windows, whose white blinds are, when the rooms are unoccupied, kept carefully raised, that the passers-by may be tempted to enter by the enticements presented to their gaze, which consist of a very white bath, like a tomb, or a "conglomeration" of marble slabs and yellow deal work, each a kind of miniature *Morgue*, with everything provided but the corpse. A damp vapour hangs about the doors, and a smell as of a myriad washing days pervades the entire place. On the pavement stand hungry men, ever on the watch for victims, ready to clutch the innocent passengers, male and female, and, carrying them into the

recesses of their haunts, give them such a taste of Hydrophathy as to make them shudder at the name of the "cure" for some time to come. It is no use endeavouring to escape from these persecutors; you may succeed in tearing your coat-tails from the grasp of one, but you are sure to fall a victim to the many. Your best way is to go in quietly, and, after being left alone in a bath, rush out suddenly, and escape over some back wall; but to traverse the pavement without falling into their snare is—and we have tried it many times—impossible. The establishment with which our story is more immediately connected is situated not a hundred miles from the M—ri—e L—br—y. It is on rather a larger scale than its neighbours, and it is rather more redolent of paint and steam, and what Mr. Weller terms the flavour of "warm flat irons." Upon its white boarded front hang many notices and inscriptions, such as "Hot Baths always ready;" "Shower Baths at a moment's notice," &c., &c. The establishment itself has two swing doors, before which, when our chapter opens, several indefatigable attendants are touting—that is, accosting the passenger with an importunity that would shame an Irish beggar, or the "bearer of the plate" in a fashionable church. Here comes an old gentleman, evidently on his way to the reading-rooms or pier. Let us stand aside and watch these harpies' proceedings.

First Touter advances—

"Want a bath, sir?"

Old gentleman, mildly—

“No.”

Second Touter intercepts him, and speaks in an insinuating manner—

“Want a *hot* bath, sir?”

Old gentleman, quickening his pace—

“No!”

Third Touter, seizing his arm, and gazing reproachfully in his face—

“Want a *hip* bath, sir?”

First Touter, resting his chin on old gentleman's shoulder, looks at him lovingly—

“It's a shower bath you wants?”

Old gentleman turns upon his tormentors, and ejaculates, angrily—

“No, no, no!”

He then makes a wild endeavour to escape, but they all surround him, and slowly but surely he is pushed towards the doors.

“This way, sir,” says Touter No. 1, evidently a man of decision, and he flings open one of the swing-doors, and calls to some one within—“Cold bath!”

“But I don't want a cold bath,” cries the old gentleman, struggling frantically.

“Very good, sir; didn't I say so?” an Touter No. 2, calls with the lungs of Stentor, for “Hot bath!”

With arms wildly waving, and eyes flashing with indignation, the old gentleman, scorning to yield, still struggles—

"I don't want—"

"A cold bath? No! sir;" and with one well-directed shove, No. 2 pushes him into the purlieu of the establishment, where he is received by an attendant, who hands him a couple of towels, which he—now quite bewildered—grasps mechanically.

"Towels, sir! quite ready, sir;" and they—the attendant and the old gentleman—disappeared. As the doors close behind them, a short derisive laugh breaks from the touters.

"Clean old gent, that, Tommy," says No. 1.

"Werry; this 'll make the third bath he's taken this mornin'," replies No. 2.

"He'll go mad of the hydrophoby," laughs No. 1; and putting their hands into their pockets, they indulge in a short, but expressive dance of triumph.

Third Touter, who has followed old gentleman, reappears at door, and is welcomed by his fellows.

"All right, Jem!"

"In course—he went in like a lamb."

"Hush! here comes another."

The "another" was an old lady in green spectacles, carrying a very curly poodle dog. Let us throw the remainder of the scene into a dramatic form.

FIRST TOUTER. (*advancing*) Want a bath, mum?

OLD LADY. (*with dignity*) NO!

FIRST TOUTER. (*with insidious sarcasm*) Little dog want a bath, mum?"

OLD LADY. Get away; no! (*she advances towards*

SECOND TOUTER.) Which is the Marine Library, my good man?

SECOND TOUTER. (*quickly*) This is, mum!

*He opens door. The same attendant appears and takes possession of OLD LADY ; the door closes as before. The SECOND TOUTER places fingers to nose and extends them playfully.*

FIRST TOUTER. (*glancing down the street*) Here they come! Keep the pot a 'biling.

The two bubbles that chanced at that moment to swim upon the surface were our friends Augustus Poppleton and Thomas Dowse, just returned from the salt-water excursion upon which we left them intent in our last chapter. Poppleton—the changed and changeable Poppleton—came jauntily along the pavement, whistling and singing alternately. In the rear of his “sick friend” followed Thomas Dowse—but changed—sadly changed. Upon his head was the invalid cap, the lappets pulled down, and strings tied tightly under his ears. He was no longer the merry little hosier, with healthy appetite and digestion to match, but very wet, very pale, and utterly miserable; indeed, the two friends seemed almost to have changed characters.

We said that Mr. Poppleton was singing—and the song of his selection was peculiar, though by no means elegant—but there was, as he observed apologetically to his friend, a taste of the “briny” about it that was very appropriate for a Margate audience.

“It’s none of your over-refined, namby-pamby,



sky-blue productions ; but it's imaginative and highly poetic, and in the days of Yankee melodies, Billingsgate lyrics, and Christy Minstrels, I don't despair of seeing this—my favourite song—upon every young lady's piano. Wasn't the first verse magnificent?"

"I wasn't listening."

"No! That was your loss, Dowse."

"I'm not fond of music."

"Then affect a taste ; it's often enough done nowadays—never too late to mend. Stop, I'll give it you over again."

And, despite the earnest entreaties of his friend, he re-commenced the ditty in a voice which might have rivalled that of Mr. Thomas Pipes, which, according to his historian, Smollett, bore a close resemblance to the droning of bagpipes, and the sound of an east wind sighing through a cranny—

"One Friday morning we did set sail,  
But we had not got far from the land,  
When we spied a pretty mar-maid,  
With a comb and a glass in her hand—y—y  
dandy—dand."\*

"Poppleton ! Augustus ! I really must insist—"

"Pooh ! come along, and don't look so indifferent to harmony."

"Three times round went our gallant ship,  
And three times round went she—e—e—e ;  
Three times round went our gallant ship,  
And sunk unto the bottom of the sea—e—e—e."

\* The author of *Poor Poppleton* having inserted the above graceful effusion from memory, will not answer that his quotation is correct.

"Why don't you speak, Dowsy? Why, any one would think you'd got something upon your mind."

Mr. Dowse, who was shaking the wet off his clothes, answered sulkily—

"Then I havn't on my stomach. I told you how it would be."

Poppleton looked down into his friend's pale face, and laughed—

"Why, we hadn't rowed a dozen yards—what a poor creature you are!"

"I told you I couldn't abear the sea—pleasure party you call it—ugh!"

"Well; didn't I throw it up directly?"

The hosier gave a grimace—

"And so did I, sooner than you expected. And then to tumble into that infernal surf—"

"Want a bath, sir?" suddenly ejaculates Touter No. 1, close to Dowse's ear.

The hosier gave himself a shake like a Newfoundland dog, and scattered the water drops around—

"Do I look as if I did? Be off with you."

"Do you want a bath, sir?" to Poppleton.

"My friend, if you lay that dirty paw of yours upon my arm again, I shall treat you to what you evidently require—a bath, gratis."

Poppleton pointed, significantly, over the wooden railings, to a rich compost of mud and mussel-shells that lay beneath. The Touters took the hint, and sauntered quietly away—at the same moment, a large-

headed boy, with a pair of very small legs, which he was using to the best of his ability, dashed up against Mr. Thomas Dowse, and, with all the force of a battering ram, drove him against the wall.

"Now, then, sto—o—pid!" shouted the irate juvenile, as he rubbed his head, which had come into contact with the buttons of Mr. Dowse's waistcoat—"where are you drivin' to?"

"Well, if ever I"—and it was with difficulty the hosier kept his equilibrium—"from such a shrimp too!"

The lack of size upon the part of the boy seemed to increase the citizen's anger. He seized the offender by the collar, and shook him so violently that the youth's large head seemed about to part from his shoulders. The boy struggled and writhed in Dowse's grasp, and in so doing dropped a letter, which Poppleton picked up, and was about to return, when his eye rested upon the address. He looked at it steadily for a moment, then, turning the letter over, proceeded to break the seal.

"Give me my letter," said the boy, breaking loose from Dowse, and turning upon Poppleton—"Give me my letter; you're not No. 5, Prospect Place."

"Yes, I am," quickly answered Poppleton, who had perused the note, "and look here, this is a shilling."

He held up the coin before the messenger's eyes, who looked at it surlily, and nodded.

"Now, tell me—didn't a very handsome young lady give you this note?"

The boy—who was not to be mollified, even by money—assumed the air of a connoisseur, and gave immediate and contemptuous answer—

"She warn't nothink of the kind. She was a fat gal, with a large 'at."

Augustus Poppleton replaced the shilling in his pocket, made a step forward, and boxed the youth's ears soundly—"There's something for your impertinence. Be off!"

"But I want a h'answer."

"You've got one. I will carry the other myself."

The boy hurried away, but halted at the distance of some yards, and performed then and there a rapid pantomime of defiance. This being done, he turned his back upon the two friends, and walked quietly away.

"Read that!" said Poppleton to Dowse, who was still engaged shaking the wet from his clothes; "Read that! you can dry yourself afterwards."

Mr. Dowse took the note—or rather allowed the note to be thrust into his hand, and glanced at it carelessly.

"I can't read it—never saw such a hand."

Poppleton, who was looking over his shoulder, angrily reversed the letter.

"There? why, you were holding it upside down."

"I don't see much difference; it's just as difficult

this way—more, I think. The boy wants six lessons in practical penmanship.”

“Boy!!! why it’s from Jemima!”

“Is it?” said the unmoved Dowse; “then I can’t compliment Jemima upon her writing.”

He then began to read, though with an apparent difficulty—“Dear Pop.” “Well, that’s funny. ‘Dear Pop,’ and its signed ‘Weasel!’”

“Wilkins!” said the indignant lover.

“Well, but Pop.?”

“Don’t you see I’m Pop.; it’s the abbreviation that feminine affection delights in. Here, give it to me,” and he snatched the letter from his friend’s hand, “where *did* you go to school?”

“Not in the British Museum, so I can’t read hieroglyphics.”

But Poppleton had begun to read the letter, heedless of the comments of Dowse.

“DEAR POP.—*It’s sufficient that I have seen you. I desire no more.*”

“Well, that’s civil,” said the hosier.

“What?”

“Why, that she don’t want to see you again.”

“Oh! nonsense; be quiet, will you!” and Poppleton resumed his reading.

“*I am happy. I return to town to-morrow, and, of course, you will follow me.*”

“Yes, yes,” broke in the hosier, “of course you will; by all means, do. But first finish the note—”

*"If, then, my father still continues obdurate, we, who have lived but for each other, at least can die together"*

"Certainly ; it's the least you can do. A very sensible girl, that."

*"I shall be at the Railway Station at nine o'clock to-morrow morning."*

*"Till death ! your own*

*"JEMIMA."*

"Dowse, my friend, wish me joy ; I really begin to think the doctors have made a mistake, after ail."

"So do I," was the brief response.

"Let us go and quaff a bumper to the health of Jemima—tell me, Dowsy, what will you take?"

"Cold, if I stand here much longer ; I shall go home."

"Home ! and you call yourself a friend—go to Bath !"

Upon that word, the Touters, who had come creeping back, spake, as with one voice—

"Bath ! sir ! yes, sir ! hot bath ? cold bath ? hip or shower ?"

Dowse, who was beginning to shiver in his wet garments, hesitated, and with a Margate Touter, to hesitate was to be lost.

"Well, I think a hot bath might dome good, while you dry my clothes."

"Of course it will, sir ; all right, sir, this way, sir !"

“And the other gent?” said the second Touter, approaching Poppleton.

“No,” said that gentleman ; “I’ll wait.”

“This door for the waiting-room.”

Poppleton, still in heroics, moved towards the door as directed. Dowse placed his hand upon his arm.

“Poppleton !”

“Jemima !”

This was too much for Dowse’s patience, even from a “sick friend ;” he, no he did not, *bless* Jemima—he said something, to blot out which would require from the recording angel a tear—and then the friends disappeared in the Margate Bathing Establishment by different doors.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE interior, or rather the principal room in the interior of the Bathing Establishment, was after the model of that most ancient order of architecture, the barn—the walls, like many other wooden and worthless materials, passed for a something much better than they really were : at the back of the room were large doors and windows, through which might be discerned, so it was styled in the advertisements, “ A splendid view of the sea ;” the upper portion of some bathing-machines were seen like so many stranded turtles close to the window—other bathing machines were crawling out into the water, while beyond them appeared a portion of the pier. The walls were spotted, or appeared to have broken out into an eruption of many-coloured advertising placards—bills of theatres, concerts, &c.—while a cabinet piano stood on one side, tastefully decorated with a small vase of flowers. Besides the piano, there was a table covered with magazines and newspapers, and in one corner of the room hung two pair of dusty boxing-gloves and some foils—the whole room presented a picture whose duplicate all who wish



may contemplate by visiting any "popular" watering-place within an easy railway distance of the metropolis—one of those vast collections of baths and washhouses which have been aptly termed "great national hospitals for out-door patients." The room had many occupants, at the piano, on a tall stool, sat a small, bony child, torturing, with fingers as hard and angular as dominoes, the keys of the piano; her mother, a harpy of a doubtful age, sat beside her, and with the blind bigotry of a Gardner or Bonner, increased, by her approval, the cruel torture inflicted upon her daughter's victims. The victims consisted of an old gentleman reading, or endeavouring to read, a newspaper, and some four or five young ladies, who, in grotesquely large hats, appeared like a row of gigantic fungi springing from a wooden bench in the background.

"Louder, Cecilia; louder, dear," said the lady by the piano.

"Surely, ma'am," implored the old gentleman, looking up from his paper, "It's quite loud enough."

"The lady lifted her stately head, and regarded the speaker with much contempt.

"P'r'aps you're not fond of music, sir?" she pronounced the "sir" with much emphasis.

"Music? humph!—no ma'am."

"Then," continued the lady, "you had better leave any remarks to them as is—you may go on, Celia, dear."

"It's finished, ma," squeaked the bony prodigy from the music stool.

"Then play it over again." At this fearful command, there was in the company assembled—to use the language of the penny-a-liner—a great sensation; but the fond mother—not only blind but deaf to her daughter's faults—repeated the order—

"Play it again, Cecilia, and be careful in the fingering."

"Fingering! fisting, you mean, ma'am." Here, attendant! waiter! you, sir, what's your name?—is my bath ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank Heaven!" and the old gentleman, throwing down his newspaper, hurried out after the attendant, who opened a door on the left-hand side of the room. The mamma followed him with her eyes, and when he had disappeared, indulged herself in a prolonged and disdainful sniff.

"Riff-raff! but I despise such persons—go on, dear!" Cecilia did go on, but the only angels who were disturbed by her playing were the young ladies who hitherto had remained in the back-ground—they rose from their seats—laughed, talked, and made what other noise was possible—but the means were not sufficient to attain the desired end. Cecilia continued to play, and her mother to beat what she called time to the music. Let us listen to the conversation of these young ladies, who have just been joined by several others, likewise intent on bathing—it may be taken as a fair sample of watering place tittle-tattle.

One young lady, a brunette, with glossy black hair, and large languishing eyes, addresses a young blonde, at the same time pointing to a book she carries in her hand.

“What have you got there, dear?”

“This? Oh! it’s Mr. James’s ‘False Heir.’”

“Yes, I know it; it’s so nice, but you should read ‘Mabel the Mildewed, or the Mouldy Monk of Dryburgh Abbey.’”

“Oh! don’t, dear; I couldn’t, it would frighten me to death. I like fashionable novels; look at this, it’s such a darling, ‘Ferdinand Fitzwynkin, or the Belle of Belgravia,’ it’s by Mrs. Tyresome Bore.”

Here a third young lady breaks in with—“La, lend it me,” and, taking the book, adds, “I shall read it in half-an-hour.”

“But that’s the third volume.”

“Oh! it don’t matter; I always read the third volume first, it’s generally the most interesting;” then turning over a few pages, she read, with that peculiar nasal drawl, so much affected by very young ladies and popular Puseyite preachers—

“‘*Still clinging to the coat tails of her infuriated parent, she was dragged twice round the spacious apartment, then across the staircase, down a flight of marble steps into the hall, where she fell with her fair forehead upon the pavement.*’ Lor’! how nice!”

“Isn’t it?” said the young lady, who was the proprietor of the book; “well, it’s all like that.”

“Did you see Charley Pappington yesterday?” asked a little pocket Venus, of about fifteen; “he was on the sands yesterday with his mamma.”

“Has he got his commission.”

“Yes, dear; and such a love of a moustache.”

“Lor’! only think of that; and Ensign Pupps, who Fanny’s so sweet upon, hasn’t six hairs upon his chin, though he’s been gazetted this six weeks.”

Here the conversation was broken off by the entrance of the bathing woman, who announced, in a voice as musical as the grunt of an hippopotamus, that “the machines are ready, and please look alive.”

Obedient to the voice of the charmer, the young ladies, with much smiling and giggling, were about to follow their directress through the doors at the back, that lead out upon the beach, when Augustus Poppleton entered. They all started as though they had never seen a man before—drew themselves up and the front of their hats down, so as to hide their faces entirely, *à la mode de Ramsgate, &c.*

“Ah!” said Poppleton, as in self-communion; “ugly girls, or they wouldn’t do that.”

In a moment the front of the hats flew up, and a dozen eyes of every pleasant variety of colour flashed indignation upon him; with heads erect, they swept past, and left Poppleton—convulsed with laughter—

“Good girls; set their faces against falsehood, I

see ; but bother those hats, they should be interdicted to all but the ugly women, and then nobody would wear them. Hilloh !—what's that ?”

It was Cecilia singing ; that dear child's accomplishments were marvellous ; as the mother said, in the pride of her heart, “she sings vocal as well as instrumental.”

“Charming voice !” ejaculated Poppleton, approaching the piano ; “beautiful ! beautiful ! pupil of Cruvelli or Garcia, I suppose : what is she singing now, madam, is it Welch ?”

“*I*’talian, sir.”

“Ah ! so it is—yes, I think I know it !”

Poppleton paused reflectingly ; the lady hastened to his relief—

“The Caustic Diver ; the air's by Madame Greasey.”

“Ah ! I thought I knew it ; but I like English melodies, simple ballads, something I can understand—”

“They must be very simple,” sneered the lady.

“Exactly so—a something that belongs to our literature, and is a credit to it—something soft and sentimental—possibly the young lady can oblige me.”

The mamma nodded her head graciously.

“If you will mention—”

“Of course I will—now there's Vilikin's and his Dinah, or the Ratcatcher's Daughter ;” and, to the horror of Cecilia and her mother, he proceeded to

whistle a portion of the last tune—"pathetic, isn't it?"

The indignant parent rose from her chair, and addressed her daughter—

"Cecilia, dear, come away?" at the same moment the Bathing-woman appeared at the door.

"The machine are ready, mum."

"Very well;" and gathering Cecilia under her protecting wing, the offended lady passed the wicked Poppleton, saying, in a hissing whisper that a Siddon's would not have disowned for its withering intensity—"Phaugh! common person."

Poppleton gazed after the retreating form, and when the door had closed upon it, paused in the tune which had given so much offence, and which he had continued to whistle.

"Ha! ha! routed the enemy at last. What a time Dowse is; and if there is one thing that I dislike more than another, it's waiting for anybody."

He said this impatiently, and began to walk round the room, examining the advertisements and placards.

"Here's a variety of amusements for those that care about these things," and he went on reading "The Pyrenean Stunners will perform this evening, wet or dry; also the 'Great Salamander, who swallows coals of fire;'—he must be dry enough, that fellow—'the famous Sword Swallower from Paris;' and 'the Cannibals from the South Seas, who will eat raw meat before the audience;'—and glad to get it, I should think, in such times as these—it's clear these savages

weren't visited by Captain Cook ;'—and Poppleton continued to read—“‘the Ostrich of the Desert, whose appetite is truly fabulous,’—there's no doubt of *that*—‘he will devour a plate of tenpenny nails, and any object of ironwork that may be presented to him by the audience.’—’Pon my word ! fancy making your larder of a blacksmith's shop. Well, ‘may good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both.’ Let's find another placard,—um—um ! ‘Lodgings for an invalid, facing St. Sepulchre's Church,’—with an enlivening view of the churchyard, I suppose ;—‘The Human Pyramid, or the Acrobats of Egypt,’ um—um ! ‘Theatre Royal ;’—‘Concert ;’—of course, nothing but concerts now a-days. What a musical people we must be, to be sure. Ah ! I once loved, when—”

Poppleton started ; for at that moment a voice commenced singing from—at least so it appeared—one of the bathing machines, whose tops were close to the open windows of the room—

We'll love though thou art poor, dear,  
For what is wealth to me ?  
The world would all seem poor, dear,  
This world deprived of thee.

True love should not despair, dear,  
There's hope while the heart beats high,  
The lark, whose nest is nearest earth,  
Finds her music in the sky.

Poppleton listened with all his ears—he had only two—but, as this is an observation much favoured by modern writers, I see no reason why I should not use it.

"It is! it must be! That voice—that song, which I myself composed in happier years; it is, it is, Jemima!"

He approached the door, and listened attentively.

"She oomes! I hear her gentle tread; her sylph-like form appears—and thus I rush to embrace her!"

The door at back swung open, and Poppleton, plunging forward, threw his arms round the graceful form of—the bathing woman.

"H'imperance!"

And with the strength of an insulted and indignant virtue, she sent poor Poppleton staggering back several yards.

"Jemima!"

"Get out! My name's Saircy."

"Tell me," implored the bewildered Poppleton, "did that voice belong to you?"

"Wot voice?"

"That voice!"

"This voice?"

"No! no! that."

"I tell you what it is, young man," said the angry matron, who was a stalwart giantess of some fifty summers, with a rugged countenance, and from her frequent immersions in the salt sea wave, a "very ancient and fish-like smell." "You had better go an' get your 'ead shaved, and next time you see your tailor, order a veskit made straight."

"Silence, amphibious female! \_silence, and listen!" And again Poppleton went through a series of



attitudes which would have made the fortune of a sculptor, could he have transferred them to marble, as the song continued

We'll love as they loved of old, dear,  
When worth was much and wealth was small;  
For the world has grown so cold, dear,  
That its chill lies over all.

True love should not despair, dear,  
Let us love as in days gone by;  
The lark, whose nest is nearest earth,  
Finds her music in the sky.

"It is her voice!"

He was rushing off again, when an attendant entered through a side-door, and addressed him—

"Beg pardin', but the gent's a-waitin' for you, sir."

"What gent?"

"Your friend, Sir."

"Friends! I have no friends!" and pushing past the bathing-woman, he darted down the steps at the back.

"That young man has got a tile off," begun the bathing-woman, when bounding *up* the steps. Augustus Poppleton re-entered the room—

"Woman!—I mean respected and respectable female; have you seen a young lady out there?" and he pointed towards the beach.

"Dozens on 'em."

"A beautiful young lady?"

The bathing-woman reflected.

"Tastes differ; but there's one as ain't ugly—she is in that there machine."

Poppleton clasped his hands.

“Take me to her !”

Diana herself could not have received the request with more disdain.

“Get along with your h'imperance.”

“Uncharitable Undine ;—but I'll go myself.”

He was about to carry this resolve into execution, when the bathing-woman roughly interposed—

“No, you don't. What ! do you want to take away the ka'racter of the establishment. There, don't take on so. She'll be here herself in less nor ten minutes.”

“Consoling thought. I'll wait.”

At this moment a bell in the adjoining room rung violently, and the same attendant that had previously entered, now re-appeared—

“It's your friend, Sir ; he's tired of waiting. Say's he'll go.”

“Go ? nonsense ! Who'd object to wait, when he's obliging a friend. There goes the bell again ; what an impatient man he is ! How shall I amuse him for ten minutes ? Ah ! what do I see ?” and his eyes fell upon the boxing-gloves hanging upon the wall—“they'll do ; there's nothing like exercise after a bath.” He took down the gloves, and turned to the attendant—“Where is he ? In the next room ? Very well ; lead on, I'll follow thee. And best of women,”—to the bathing-woman—“tell me when she comes.”

“In course.” Then, as the door closed behind him, she added—“I shan't do nothink of the kind.”

## CHAPTER V.

THE old bathing-woman had scarcely disappeared down the rickety steps that led upon a platform, from which various planks communicated with bathing machines, that were either receiving or disgorging their occupants, than two ladies ascended them, and entered the waiting-room. One—the elder—was our pleasant-faced and sound-hearted friend, Mrs. Dowse ; the other—how shall we describe her ? “ Grace in all her movements ; in every gesture dignity and love ? ” or, “ that she seemed an angel newly dressed, save wings for Heaven ? ” Certainly not. She was a blooming “ bouncing ” English girl of eighteen, plump as a partridge, and with a smile that rested on her face ; a bright “ bow of promise,” through which was ever gleaming the sunshine of her heart. The elder lady carried a book, and the other a small white rose, that she twirled about in her fingers in an absent manner as she entered the room, and threw herself into a chair.

“ Charming weather, Miss ! ” said Mrs. Dowse,

glancing at the younger lady's face with a smile ; for to her kind heart, such a face was a sufficient letter of introduction. The young lady looked up, sighed, and said—

“Charming !”

“The sea is beautiful to-day,” and Mrs. Dowse smiled again.

“There is but little beauty in the world now,” was the answer.

“Then how wrong of you, Miss,” said the hosier's lady, “to monopolise so much of it !”

The young lady smiled—even grief cannot shut the door upon flattery—but the smile passed away, and again she sighed heavily.

“Aren't you well, Miss ?”

“Oh ! yes, very well.”

She sighed, for the third time, then rose, crossed the room, and begun to turn over the music on the piano. Mrs. Dowse looked after her, and nodded with a deep significance—

“That young lady's in love. I know the symptoms. This makes the fifth young lady, I have remarked them in this morning ; it seems quite an epidemic—something in the air I suppose ;” and the pleasant little lady, whose philosophy was quite of another sort to that which finds its enjoyment in the misfortunes of others, smiled kindly on the young lady, who had almost unconsciously taken her seat before the open piano ; therefore, as the smile was not returned, being directed

at the young lady's back, Mrs. Dowse took out her knitting-needles from a small bag that dangled from her waist, and proceeded to perform some marvel in crotchet.

"I wonder where Mr. Dowse has got to?" she said half aloud; "I dare say he's walking that poor Mr. Poppleton off his legs. D. has no consideration for sick people, he always enjoys such good health himself."

"Ah!" sighed the young lady at the piano, who was no other than the object of Poppleton's adoration—Miss Wilkins herself—"Ah! I wonder what Augustus is doing now? Poor dear, how miserable he must be, sitting somewhere disconsolate on a rock!"

A similar thought was evidently in the mind of Mrs. Dowse, for almost at the same moment she said—though inaudible to Miss Wilkins—

"Poor Mr. Augustus, so weak, so interesting; I do hope Mr. Dowse is taking care of his sick friend."

Here a confused sound of voices was heard from the room to the right, followed by a great noise, as of persons scuffling and stamping. Mrs. Dowse put down her crotchet, but Miss Wilkins continued at the piano, only looking up with a sigh.

"Good gracious! my dear, did you hear that noise? What can it mean?"

"Nothing, Ma'am; only some of the gentlemen amusing themselves. *They* have such light hearts."

"But heavy bodies," said the elder lady, as there

came a violent bang against the partition ; so violent, that the small vase that was upon the piano fell over and was broken. Miss Wilkins rose hastily from her seat, and in much alarm approached Mrs. Dowse. Mrs. Dowse, also in much alarm, rose from her seat and approached Miss Wilkins. Then came another bang against the partition, which was naturally followed by a scream from the ladies.

"Oh! that Augustus was here!" exclaimed Miss Wilkins.

"Oh! where can Dowse be?" ejaculated the hosier's lady.

The words had scarcely escaped their lips, when another concussion took place. This time some hard substance was hurled against the door, which burst open, and Dowse—Dowse, whose presence his wife had invoked—rolled into the room, and fell flat at her feet, while the figure of his "sick friend," Augustus Poppleton, suddenly framed itself in the doorway, the face flushed with excitement, and the eyes distended with astonishment, as they fell upon the feminine portion of the group. Both the gentlemen wore boxing-gloves, and had evidently been engaged in pugilistic amusement, and so the stamping and scuffling was explained.

"Jemima!"

"Augustus!!"

"Mr. D.!!!"

"MURDER!!!!"

These exclamations were all fired at once, like a

volley of musketry. The last—as we have written them down—and most appalling from its intensity, came from the lips of the unhappy Dowse, who still retained his ignominious position on the floor, apparently as unable to change it, as are those “lively turtle” that repose uncomfortably on their backs, before they are resolved into soup, and find a grave beneath the belt of an alderman.

Mrs. Dowse was the first to speak—

“What is all this? Dowse, what are you doing on the floor?”

Suddenly, and with the briskness of a watch-spring, Dowse sat up, and pointing to Poppleton, made answer—

“Ask that ruffian, he put me here.”

“For shame, Sir,” said his lady, “get up and protect me.”

Before Dowse could reply, Poppleton advanced from the doorway, and bowing politely to the ladies, observed apologetically, after glancing at the prostrate Dowse—

“Protect you! why, my dear Madam, he cannot protect himself. I never saw such a guard.”

“I never saw such a blackguard,” said Dowse from the floor. He had risen to his knees, and looked towards his wife, but the good lady turned away her head somewhat angrily.

“What terrible language, Mr. Dowse, and to poor Mr. Poppleton.”

"D——n Mr. Poppleton, I've had enough of him. Tell me—does that look like a sick man?" He pointed to Poppleton, who, we are constrained to say, was making desperate love to Jemima—"Does that look like a sick man? Have you looked long enough? Then having contemplated that picture, may I request that you gaze on this?"

This time he pointed to himself; to an eye disfigured by a rim of blackness—a diamond in black enamel. Mrs. Dowse glanced at the partially extinguished optic, and screamed—

"Oh! you dreadful man. What have you been doing to yourself?"

"I? to myself! That's a good 'un! It's all a swindle, Mrs. D. Here, I go and ask a man on a visit because he's dying—yes, on the express understanding that he *is* dying—and no sooner does he take up his abode beneath my roof, than he gets well directly."

"Of course he does;"—it was Poppleton who spoke now—"here's the cure," he indicated the blushing Miss Wilkins, "and I embrace it."

He did so; not once, but half a dozen times. Mrs. Dowse smiled—her husband groaned.

"Poor Mr. Augustus," said the kind lady, "and he so ill."

This was too much.

"Ill! he ill! Nonsense Mrs. D., it's me, me—I'm ill; can't you see?" And Dowse stood, at last, upon his legs—or rather upon one of them, while he rubbed



the other tenderly with his hand. "To oblige a friend I consent to turn my house into a hospital, and he—"

"Adapts the master to his change of residence. Come, Dowsy, don't bear malice, I forgive you."

"Don't be 'ard upon the young man, said the old bathing-woman, who had just ascended the steps at back, "he's got a tile off;" here she pointed to her head, "and isn't responsible for his h'actions."

Dowse hesitated ; he looked at Poppleton's offered hand—half turned away—then repented, and was about to grasp it, when again a hubbub of voices was heard from the side-room, apparently in high dispute.

"Pay !" shouted one voice, "what for? Being half-boiled in your confounded bath? I'll see you—"

The where was inaudible, but another voice replied—

"You took the bath, Sir."

"It's a lie! you took me. Open the door, somebody !"

Poppleton, who was, as he himself expressed it "the sould of kindness," advanced towards the closed door, exclaiming, after the approved transpontine fashion, "May the ear that is deaf to the voice of distress—"

But Jemima Wilkins threw herself before him.

"Rash man! what would you do? Augustus, 'tis my father!"

Mr. Poppleton paused in his heroics, and whistled—

"Old Wilkins? the devil!"

He would have made a precipitate retreat, but the door flew open, and the father of Jemima literally tumbled into his arms, closely followed by an attendant, in whose hand he had left a portion of a coat-tail. It was a moment for immediate decision and rapidity of action, and Poppleton proved himself equal to the occasion. With the strength of a Hercules he hugged the old gentleman to his breast, and without allowing him a glimpse of his face, gazed fixedly over his shoulder.

"If he sees me, I am lost!" thought Poppleton.

"Protect me!" gasped the half stifled-Wilkins.

"With my life, much-esteemed man." Then to himself as he tightened his embrace—"Protect you, indeed, remorseless old curmudgeon!"

"What are you about? I shall be stifled! Let me go!"

He struggled to release himself, but Poppleton only hugged him the closer. "If I can but reach the door," he thought, "I'll bonnet him and escape." Then aloud, "Venerable man, I entreat you to be calm and quiet."

"Let me go, scoundrel! let me go!" and by a sudden effort he released himself, just as Poppleton had succeeded in forcing his hat down over his eyes. "What do you mean? Who the deuce are you, Sir." He pushed up his hat and glared at his tormentor.—"Augustus Poppleton!"

"Discovered!" said that gentleman, and retreating

before Wilkins, he fell back upon Dowse. "Dowse, protect me! hold me, I'm so ill."

"No, you ain't," exclaimed the hosier, hastily, "you're nothing of the kind. I can't stand any more of that, you know."

In the meanwhile Old Wilkins had gazed round the room, and recognised another of its occupants in the person of his daughter, who, upon his first appearance, had dropped back into the arms of the bathing-woman, as suddenly—we borrow the latter individual's phraseology—"as if she'd been skeared by a bull, or taken coloforum."

"Jemima," said her father.—"Well, come, this is fortunate!" He then made a sudden advance upon the amazed Poppleton, and seized his hand—"My dear Poppleton! my dear friend, Poppleton! I am delighted to see you looking so well, de—lighted," and he gave his hand an energetic shake after each word.

"Oh! he's mad," groaned the artist, "brain regularly gone—gracious! how his eyes glare through his spectacles. Leave go, Sir! leave go! He'll bite—I know he will!"

"My dear Mr. Augustus, I've been seeking you everywhere—and so has Jemmy there, I'll be bound."

Poppleton still retreated—this conduct on the part of the old gentleman was unaccountable.

"Shouldn't wonder if he foams at the mouth presently. I hope it don't run in the family."

He liberated himself and made for the door, but the bathing-woman prevented his exit.

"Not this way. T'other's the way out."

"Augustus! where are you going?" cried Miss Wilkins, "and—"

"Oh! Mr. Poppleton, think of your health; you're going out without your hat," exclaimed Mrs. Dowse.

"They're all mad," said the utterly bewildered Poppleton, "it's catching. There was a change in the moon last night. I see it all."

"Damn it, Gus!" said Old Wilkins, losing patience at Poppleton's strange reception of his proffered civility.

"Gus? oh! I can't stand this, he's chaffing," and changing his entire manner, Poppleton approached Mr. Wilkins—"Respected and respectable oil merchant, explain yourself. Father of Jemima, I demand an explanation."

"You should have had one before, but for your most extraordinary behaviour—read that, my boy," and he handed him a letter; "do you know the handwriting?"

Poppleton looked at the letter and started—

"Know it? of course I do. 'Oh! my prophetic soul, my uncle.'"

"Yes," and Wilkins nodded confidentially, "I wrote to him three days ago, and this is his answer."

"His uncle? Why, Dowse, you never told me he had one," said the hosier's wife.

"Pooh! everybody has an uncle, only it's the fashion not to confess to him. Poppleton was

pretty constant in his visits to one of his, I believe."

Mrs. Dowse glanced with commiseration towards Poppleton, who had opened the letter, and only said, "Poor Mr. Augustus!"

"Um—um," and Poppleton, after puzzling at the first few words of the letter, began to read the remainder aloud—

*"I am delighted to hear that Augustus is likely to become steady; it's quite time, so I shall look over past follies, and give the young people my blessing."*

"Liberal old man!"

"Go on, go on! my boy," urged the now jovial Wilkins, and Poppleton continued to read—

*"And a few hundreds for them to face the world with, on the understanding that you will do the same by your daughter."*

The letter fell from poor Poppleton's hands.

"I'm giddy—here, hold me, some one." He was moving over towards Dowse, who, standing on one leg, like a fowl, was still manipulating the other, "Dowse, support me."

"I shan't," said that gentleman, testily, "I've supported you long enough. If you want to faint, do it decently—take a chair."

"Would the young man like a little brandy?" put in the bathing-woman; "or would the young lady—just a little, *dehuded* with water?"

This friendly offer was refused, and Wilkins took Poppleton's hand—

"There," and he placed that of Jemima in it, "bless you, my children. The words have possibly been said somewhere before, but I rejoice in their repetition—"bless you!"

"Yes, bless 'em!" Mrs. Dowse put her handkerchief to her eyes, and turned to her husband—"Dowse, where are your tears?"

"They won't come to order, like yours, Mrs. D.; still, it is affecting."

Poppleton seized the hosier's hand—"Worthy couple! I can never forget your kindness."

"Nor I yours," said the little citizen, with a grimace.

"You wish me joy?"

"I do. But I tell you what it is—the next time you pay me a visit, let it be in a different character than the one you have so badly sustained."

"What's that?"

"POOR POPPLETON, my—"

"SICK FRIEND!"

END OF POOR POPPLETON.

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# TEMPLE BAR,

*A London Magazine*

FOR TOWN AND COUNTRY READERS,

CONDUCTED BY

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA,

AUTHOR OF "WILLIAM HOGARTH," ETC.

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No. 1, ready December 1, 1860.

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## PROSPECTUS.

WE cannot plead, as an excuse for calling our New Monthly Miscellany "TEMPLE BAR," that it will be either written or printed in the edifice which divides London from Westminster. The books of an eminent banking firm are, we believe, kept in Temple Bar; while, according to some City legends, it is there that the unhorsed man-in-brass has his hermitage, and, eschewing the vanities of Lord Mayor's shows, perpetually polishes his brazen panoply. Yet we have, as we think, as clear a right to christen our Periodical after Sir Christopher Wren's architectural whim as Sylvanus Urban had to place a woodcut of St. John's Gate on the title-page of the "Gentleman's Magazine." For while Temple Bar is essentially metropolitan, and is a link connecting the glories of the Strand and Fleet Street, our Editor will abide in the first, and our Publishing Office will be in the last-named thoroughfare. Temple Bar belongs not only to London, but to England. Indeed, those born within the sound of Bow bells have grown so habituated to the sight of the gray old structure as scarcely to regard it; whereas never a country cousin comes to town without gazing at Temple Bar with mingled curiosity and affection; and when that long-promised New Zealander visits the metropolis, it may not be on a ruined arch of London Bridge that he will fix his camp-stool, but rather in the room above Temple Bar—by permission of Messrs. Child—that he

## "TEMPLE BAR"—A LONDON MAGAZINE.

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may set up his easel, and whence he will be enabled to sketch Somerset House towards the West, and the Temple Gates towards the East.

This Magazine, then, shall be called

### "TEMPLE BAR,"

because the great tide of cosmopolitan humanity is for ever flowing through its arches; because the country and the town, the island and the continent, on foot, on horseback, and in carriages, give each other rendezvous by Temple Bar; because we consider a woodcut of the BAR, by way of frontispiece, to be far more significant of our purpose, in establishing a Magazine for Town and Country Readers, than an engraving of the Royal Arms, or of the Rose, Shamrock, and Thistle, or of the Marble Arch, would be. We might have fixed on the "Great Bell of St. Paul's," or on "Gog and Magog," or on "London Stone," as a title; but we are content to adopt "Temple Bar." We could give five hundred reasons for our choice. The BAR is not only associated with much that is famous in English history, but with nearly all that is memorable in English literature; and from our pictured window in Temple Bar we shall see brave old Doctor Johnson strolling up Fleet Street with James Boswell; and haughty Bishop Warburton coming to visit Oliver Goldsmith; and Mr. Spectator gliding towards the Temple Gardens with Sir Roger de Coverley; and young M. de Voltaire, on his first visit to England, taking shrewd notes of the eccentric people who cut off the tails of horses and the heads of kings. We shall remember that, in Temple Bar, we are close to the renowned haunts of Raleigh, and Jonson, and Massinger, and SHAKSPEARE—of Wycherley, of Congreve, and of Pope; that the immortal wits who used to haunt the "Mermaid," the "Devil" and the "Apollo" Taverns, all passed beneath Temple Bar; that it was at the "Cock" that Alfred Tennyson beheld the plump head-waiter, tasted that old Port, and felt that eternal lack of pence which vexeth publicmen; that the "Rainbow" and the "Mitre" yet flourish; that the old thoroughfare to Ludgate is yet the centre and head-quarters of English thought and English art, and teems with printing houses, booksellers' stores, newspaper offices, engravers' studios, and bookbinders' workshops; and that to our immediate right, looking eastward, stands yet the grand old monastery of Law and Learning and Chivalry, where the Knights of the Temple yet ride on one horse; where Mr.



## "TEMPLE BAR"—A LONDON MAGAZINE.

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Arthur Pendennis is yet chatting with Mr. George Warrington at chambers in Lamb and Flag Court, and whence, we trust, many a "young gentleman of the Inns of Court" will bring that surplus erudition and brilliance, not too highly appreciated in the Special Pleader's chambers, and see what we can make of them at Temple Bar.

The price of our Magazine will be One Shilling. We believe that the days of half-crown serials are fled. Ours we wish to place within the means of every section of the reading community; and our patrons will soon be in a position to admit that we shall give them once a month, for One Shilling, what could not—quantity and quality considered—be sold to them once a week for one penny. For a shilling, we trust that many thousand friends yet unknown to us will long enjoy a miscellany of satisfactory bulk, well and clearly printed on good paper, occasionally illustrated by the very best artists on whom our Editor can lay hands, and full of solid yet entertaining matter, that shall be interesting to Englishmen and Englishwomen of every degree, and that Filia-familias may read with as much gratification as Pater or Mater-familias. We may dispense with the stereotyped assurance that ours will be a "family magazine," and that in its pages no word will be found that shall "raise a blush on the cheek of youth and innocence." Who that wishes to find favour in these days in the eyes of the reading public would be mad or vicious enough to use language, or to discuss topics unsuited to the perusal of the young and innocent? When we are guilty of such a tasteless blunder, we hope that our readers will all become Commissioners of Works, and forthwith proceed to pull down "Temple Bar."

A word as to the contemplated contents of our Magazine. Our Editor will contribute a series of sketches of travels, which he has undertaken, in sundry remote regions not entirely unknown in English country maps, which will be continued from month to month, and, from time to time, illustrated by his own pencil. This task will not preclude him from telling little stories, drawing little pictures, sketching little characters, and writing little essays in the manner which has secured him, for a considerable period, the kindly encouragement of the public. We shall have a domestic romance of English life and manners—and of love; for what is life without love? by "an eminent hand"—in other words, by the very best novelist that can be procured by perseverance, and pounds, shillings, and pence. An experienced reviewer will take the most popular book of the season, and give us a fair and honest description of its contents and its merits. A poet will sound his lyre—but with this proviso,—that when we cannot find a really good poetic

## "TEMPLE BAR"—A LONDON MAGAZINE.

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effusion in our store, we shall confine ourselves, for that month, at least, to prose. Scientific writers will discourse to us of the wonders of the air, the earth, or the sea; descriptive writers, essayists, travellers, will have their say; a ripe scholar may take us back to the classic past, and tell us that "light literature" need not be without learning and without thought; and by way of an *omelette soufflée* after, we trust, a succulent banquet, we may have some pages of gossip about the newest play, the best opera, and the prettiest picture of the day. As for politics, there will not be any, either to the East or the West of the Bar: unless, indeed, there should be aught political in the dominant tone of our journal, which, from headline to imprint, will strive to inculcate thoroughly English sentiments, respect for authority, attachment to the Church, and loyalty to the Queen. Neither our Editor nor our Proprietor happen to be Lord Mayor, nor intend to shut the gates of Temple Bar in the face of Royalty.

Such, then, is our programme. It is not in the nature of things that we should be able to please everybody; but we hope to be able to please so many that the discontented shall be in an inconsiderable minority. The Editor and Conductor of "Temple Bar" will be

### MR. GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA,

who has been before the public as a writer for some years, and who for many more has been working in the dark, or worse, in that *chiaro oscuro*, which is, "not light, but only darkness visible." The Editor is fully aware of the responsibility which attaches to him in thus coming forward in broad daylight, and fixing his head on the summit of "Temple Bar." In the olden time the skulls of traitors were wont to appear on that fatal eminence; but in the present instance it is in perfect good faith that the Editor is exposed to public view. It will be his endcavour to gather round him a group of friendly heads equally devoid of traitorous intent. He will give each and every one of his fellow-labourers a fair chance and an honourable place, and he will rejoice when any one of them passes the judges' chair—at Temple Bar—even if it leaves him to make a "bad third," or to come in with the "ruck."

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